JAPANESE CASTLES AD 250–1540



STEPHEN TURNBULL

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER DENNIS

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STEPHEN TURNBULL is recognized as one of the world's foremost military historians of the medieval and early modern periods. He first rose to prominence as a result of his 1977 book, *The Samurai: A Military History*. Since then he has achieved an equal fame in writing about European military subjects and has had almost 60 books published. He has always tried to concentrate on the less familiar areas of military history, and currently divides his time between lecturing in Japanese Religion at the University of Leeds and writing.

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FORTRESS • 74

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AUTHOR'S DEDICATION

To Andrew and Sharron Brayshaw on their wedding.

PREFACE

The use of fortified places in Japan has a history as long as Japanese warfare itself, and extends back many centuries before the appearance of the word 'samurai', the term commonly applied to any Japanese warrior of the pre-modern era. Little has been written in English about early Japanese castles, and as my previous work in the Fortress series, *Japanese Castles 1540–1640* (Osprey Publishing Ltd; Oxford, 2003), dealt largely with the better known later styles of Japanese fortifications characterized by huge stone walls and soaring towers, this book will set out the origins of Japanese castles from the moated settlements of the Yayoi Period up to the emergence of the tower keep.

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CONTENTS

JAPANESE CASTLES AD 297–1540

INTRODUCTION

The first Japanese fortifications

The earliest known use of fortified sites in Japan dates from the Yayoi Period (*c.*300 BC–AD 300), which succeeded the Neolithic Jōmon Period (*c.*10,000–300 BC). Jōmon culture had been characterized by hunter/gatherer behaviour followed by primitive agriculture. Until quite recently, it was assumed that Jōmon communities consisted of no more than a dozen or so households, but excavation of the archaeological site of Sannai-Maruyama in Aomori Prefecture has revealed a large village containing what may have been a fortified structure. Six 1m-wide postholes were found, each of which formerly held a massive pillar of chestnut wood. This may indicate the presence of a lookout tower, which would imply defensive purposes, or it may even be a religious structure.

Unless further archaeological work is able to identify Sannai-Maruyama unequivocally as a fortified site, the introduction of fortifications to Japan must be dated to the succeeding Yayoi Period. The most important innovation associated with the Yayoi culture was the introduction of wet-rice cultivation by immigrants from the Asian continent. This resulted in the rapid development of food production and a consequent increase in population. The immigrants also introduced metals into the Japanese archipelago – first iron and then bronze – the reverse of the order found in other parts of the world. Iron was used primarily for tools, while bronze was cast into weapons and bells. Skeletal remains show that the people who brought the Yayoi culture were taller than the natives they displaced.

There is a wealth of archaeological evidence to suggest that warfare and fortifications played a part in the expansion of the Yayoi settlements. The discovery of broken tips of stone or bronze weapons lodged in the bones of Yayoi Period skeletons from the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD has been interpreted as indicating the onset of war and some of its likely victims. The frequency of weapon finds among bodies in the Yayoi Period is particularly striking when compared to burials in the Jōmon Period. Out of the 5,000 skeletons excavated from Jōmon graves since 1947, only ten appear to have suffered violent deaths, yet among the 1,000 skeletons associated with Yayoi sites, 100 appear to have died as a result of wounds inflicted by weapons. One victim at Doigahama appears to have been killed when a stone arrowhead struck his skull. A female skeleton in Nejiko in Nagasaki Prefecture has a bronze arrowhead lodged in her skull, while several skeletons at Yoshinogari in Kyūshū are headless.

The development of warfare at this time has been explained as follows. As populations grew and more land was sought neighbours may well have fought each other over scarce lands and reliable sources of water. We know that settlements were extended into the upper reaches of river valleys as well as the lower-lying areas, and it is at this time that we first come across evidence that some, but by no means all communities sought to protect their interests by the creation of fortifications. The first phase of defensive considerations appears to have been simply the establishment of settlements located on high ground, because numerous Yayoi Period hamlets containing between three and five households have been identified some 200 or 300m above sea level. These 'highland settlements' (*kōchisei shūraku*) could of course merely have been bases from which the fertile lower ground could be cultivated without wasting any valuable space. This may well have been the original reason for their creation during the 1st century AD, but the discovery of weapons at some later sites, together with scorched earth and ashes (which may indicate the sites of beacons) has suggested an additional military role. Indeed, it is now accepted that most upland sites at least provided the function of a lookout post in case of an attack.

This archaeological evidence for fortification and sporadic conflict is reflected in the earliest written accounts concerning Japan. These may be found in the Chinese dynastic histories, of which the first to refer to Japan is the *Wei Zhi*, the history of the Wei dynasty (AD 220–65), which was compiled about AD 297. The account of the country of *Wa*, as Japan was then known, appears in a section in which China's barbarian neighbours are described, and, although the description is brief, it includes the mention of a fortified place:

> The country formerly had a man as ruler. For some 70 or 80 years after that there were disturbances and warfare. Thereupon the people agreed upon a woman for their ruler. Her name was Himiko. She occupied herself with magic and sorcery, bewitching the people. … She resided in a palace surrounded by towers and stockades, with armed guards in a state of constant vigilance.

A very similar description occurs in the *Hou Hanshu*, the history of the Later Han dynasty, compiled in about AD 445. The suggestion by the author of the *Wei Zhi* that warfare developed in Japan in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD tallies with the archaeological evidence noted above, which also shows that this was a time when arrowheads were being produced that were heavier and



Yoshinogari is the most important Yayoi Period site in Japan. It possesses several defensive features, most of which are shown in this view looking in towards the main enclosure. There are three watchtowers, a palisade fence and a ditch. A simple tower protects the gateway. In the foreground is a rice storehouse.

deadlier than those made for hunting. The spacing of the highland settlements allowed smoke signals to be sent from one base to another, and these hamlets frequently lay within a short distance of major Yayoi settlements.

These larger Yayoi sites have been well studied, and provide strong evidence of early Japanese fortifications. Important places such as Otsuka near Yokohama and Yoshinogari in Kyūshū were settlements protected by ditches (*kangō shūraku*). Ditches have also been found in certain highland sites, and half a century of excavation has revealed 79 such villages from Kyūshū to northern Honshū. Asahi in Aichi Prefecture provides a good example of a fortified Yayoi village. Three ditches provided defence. The outer one was between 5 and 7m wide and 1.5m deep; while the inner two were between 1.5 and 2m deep. Inside the ditches stakes, planks of wood and twisted branches had been arranged to make access impossible except across the bridges the linked the various sections. Beyond the outer ditch was a thigh-high line of stakes and planking. All such sites are of the Yayoi Period, and none is later than AD 300.

The Korean-style fortresses of the Yamato State

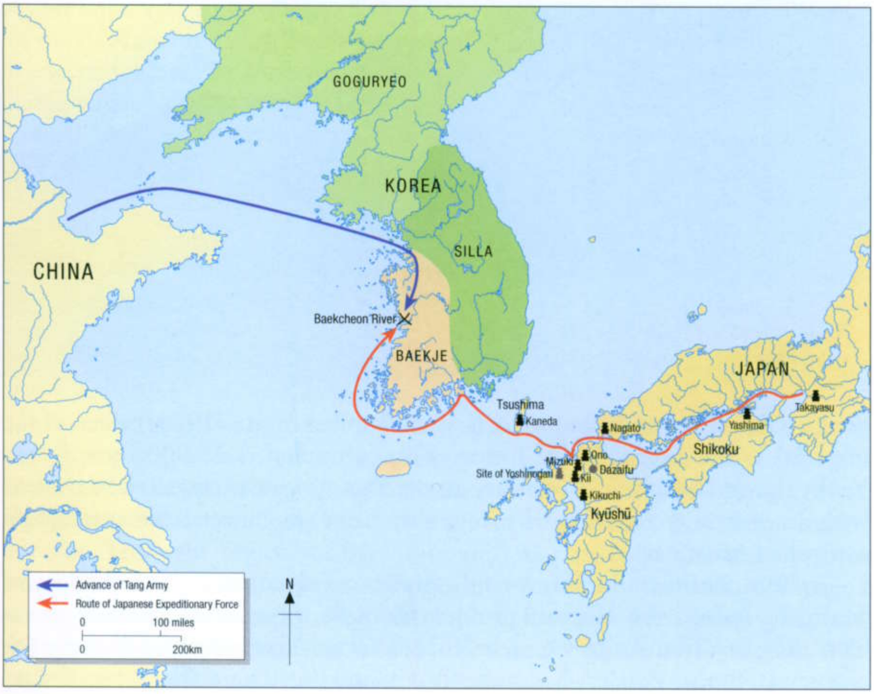
The development of Yayoi culture culminated in the emergence of the unified Yamato State: the dominant clan lineage that was to become the Japanese imperial house. By the 3rd century AD the Yamato court had achieved supremacy within the area of modern Nara Prefecture and had begun to extend its influence much wider. The eventual triumph of the Yamato over their domestic opponents is shown by the absence of fortified settlements in Japan beyond about AD 300. Their archaeological monuments are instead the huge *kofun*, keyhole-shaped burial mounds, which date from about AD 250. From the early *kofun* of Hashihaka, 286m long, to the enormous mid-5th-century Daisen *kofun* at 486m, the supremacy of the ruling lineage was asserted locally in no uncertain fashion. Yet other military challenges were to be made to the fledgling imperial hegemony as the centuries went by, and each received a response that involved the creation of different types of fortified positions.

The first challenge concerned Japan's overseas interests. For the first six centuries AD the Korean Peninsula was divided into three kingdoms: Goguryeo in the north bordering China, Baekje in the south-west and Silla in the south-east. The three kingdoms fought each other over the years; sometimes individually, sometimes in alliance with one another, and in the 7th century AD with the involvement in turn of the Sui and Tang dynasties of China. Japan



This bas-relief plaque on the monument at Kikuchi Castle shows the building of Kikuchi Castle at the time when the fear of invasion from Korea was at its height. Officials are supervising the transport of timber for the barracks and storehouses.

Japan, China and the castles built against continental invasion



became involved in these conflicts, fielding expeditionary armies to support its ally Baekje and to safeguard its colonial interests in Minama, a small enclave in the south between Baekje and Silla established sometime during the 4th century AD (the traditional date is AD 369). While the Japanese cannot be said to have ruled Minama in any absolute sense, the limited control they exerted allowed them access to iron and the advanced continental culture. But the wars between the Korean kingdoms placed great pressure on Minama, which was finally absorbed by Silla in AD 562. The Yamato court planned several expeditions to retake Minama, some of which were actually put into operation. For example, a Japanese move against Silla in AD 602 is recorded in the *Nihon*

A view of Mizuki (the water fortress) as it is today. We are standing on the inner (Dazaifu) side of this remarkable earthwork, which dates from AD 664. The modern road passes through it, affording a cutaway view in the distance.





Kaneda Castle on the island of Tsushima was built in AD 667 to provide Japan's 'early warning system' for a possible invasion. In this picture we are looking up from the seashore to the immense cliffs on which Kaneda was built.

Shoki (*Chronicles of Japan*), which was compiled in AD 720. A prince of the imperial house called Prince Kume, who commanded 25,000 men, led it. Yet by the middle of the 7th century AD the Yamato court seemed to be content with a nominal recognition of sovereignty from whichever Korean kingdom controlled Minama.

Japan's continental interests did not, however, decrease with the loss of Minama. Indeed the Korean problem became more acute because of an increasing involvement by China in Korea's affairs. Towards the end of the 6th century AD the Sui dynasty had succeeded in unifying China after internal wars that had lasted for two and a half centuries. The Sui then turned their attentions towards Korea. A Goguryeo incursion into north-eastern China in AD 598 led to a prompt Sui retaliation into Korea and an apology by the Goguryeo king. Further Sui invasions of Goguryeo followed in AD 612, 613 and 614, but served only to weaken the Sui's influence at home, and the dynasty collapsed in favour of the Tang in AD 617. By the AD 640s the Tang felt secure enough to threaten Goguryeo for themselves. Their initial attempt ended in failure, and Goguryeo's success in defeating a Chinese army encouraged the northern Korean kingdom to become more belligerent against its neighbours.

Anxiety about developments on the continent and a lack of leadership at home led to a palace coup in Japan in AD 645. The new rulers soon turned their attentions to questions of national security and, although much of their attention was focused on the unsettled north-east of their own country, a matter described later, the Taika Reform Edict of AD 645 took in the need for vigilance against a possible foreign invasion from Korea against Japan's southern island of Kyūshū. Article One of the Edict specified that border guards (*sakimori*) should be provided, while Article Four stated that each recruit should supply a sword, armour, bow and arrows, a flag and a drum. In AD 646 another command was issued requiring the repair of arsenals throughout Japan. These arsenals, essentially stockpiles of weapons, did not necessarily imply fortifications, but this was a policy that was to change dramatically within the next two decades.

The reappearance of fortifications on Japanese soil came about because of a major military humiliation in Korea. The background to the disaster dates to AD 656, when Goguryeo armies in alliance with Baekje invaded Silla. Silla asked China for help, and the Tang responded positively with a very clever strategy. They concentrated first on Baekje, with the Tang advancing by sea and their Silla allies by land. Baekje fell in AD 660, but one of their generals survived to lead a resistance movement, and asked Japan for help. A Japanese

expeditionary force to aid Baekje was mounted in AD 662 and was reinforced a year later, only to be utterly destroyed in a furious naval battle at the mouth of the Baekcheon River. It was Japan's worst military defeat until World War II. According to Chinese sources, as many as 400 Japanese vessels were sunk in the engagement of AD 663 and over 10,000 men were lost. The survivors limped home to Japan, where the news they conveyed and the sight of the Baekje refugees they brought with them created a state of panic in Japan. The fear of a Chinese and Korean invasion was much more acute than it had been in the AD 640s, and patriotic courtiers took to wearing weapons. More serious reactions appeared within a year of the disaster in AD 664, when the *Nihon Shoki* tells us that Emperor Tenchi gave orders so that: 'In this year guards and beacon fires were placed in the islands of Tsushima and Iki and in the Land of Tsukushi. Moreover a great embankment was constructed and water collected. This was called the *mizuki* [water fortress].'

Frontier guards and beacon fires had been a feature of Japan's earlier emergency preparations, but the construction of the *mizuki* was a dramatic departure from previous policy. As the above entry from *Nihon Shoki* tells us, the 'water castle' was a long, moated earthwork designed to provide protection for the Tsukushi region of Kyūshū, and in particular for the regional headquarters at Dazaifu. It was designed to stall a military advance after a seaborne landing, and was effectively Japan's first ever free-standing fortified structure. Amazingly, much of it can still be seen today. It was originally 40m wide and 15m high and lay between hills across the plain facing Hakata Bay. The reference to the fact that 'water collected' does not mean that it was intended to store water. Instead its construction involved a higher inner moat in which water could accumulate and then be channelled through the rampart to top up the outer moat. The operation is described more fully in a later section. Two smaller versions were built nearby.



The location of Kaneda Castle on top of almost inaccessible peaks is shown clearly in this painting in the Historical Museum on the island of Tsushima.

Fortifications more recognizable as castles began to appear very soon after the building of Mizuki (to which I have given a capital letter as it is now a recognized monument rather than a type of defensive structure); first in Kyūshū and then along a line along the Inland Sea leading to the centre of Yamato control near modern Nara. Ironically for defences built against possible Korean aggression, these stone structures, the first seen in Japan, were created in the Korean style. This was because Korean refugees from Baekje built them, and these refugees may well have been influential in the policy decision to use fortifications as part of the overall strategic plan against invasion. An entry in the *Nihon Shoki* for AD 665 tells us: 'Tappon Chunjo ... was sent to the *kuni* of Nagato to build a fortress. Ongnye Pongnyu ... and Sabi Pokpu were sent to the *kuni* of Tsukushi to build the two fortresses of Ono and Kii.'

Ongye Pongnyu, who was jointly responsible for the construction of the important Kyūshū fortresses of Ono and Kii, had fled from Baekje along with the survivors of the Japanese fleet in AD 663, and showed his gratitude by producing impressive castles modelled on the Korean *sanseong* (mountain fortresses) with which he would have been familiar at home. Embankments of earth or



Yashima Castle, on the north-eastern tip of Shikoku Island, was one of a chain of fortresses built in the Korean style that ran from Tsushima to the imperial heartlands in Yamato Province (modern Nara Prefecture). In 1184 Yashima became the site of a famous battle.

stone encircled prominent hilltops and ridges. Storehouses for rice were built within them to make a complex that was both a military base and a refuge for those living nearby. Ono and Kii were located on the tops of mountains to the north and south respectively of Dazaifu, and augmented the ground-level defence of Mizuki. The other castle referred to in the above quotation was built in Nagato province at the western end of the Inland Sea.

Over the next few years the Tang Chinese went on to conquer Goguryeo, so that by AD 667 the Japanese rulers became more alarmed than ever and more fortresses were built. Kaneda (sometimes written Kanata) on Tsushima Island, located on a high mountain peak overlooking the sea halfway between Korea and the Japanese mainland, was clearly intended to provide Japan's 'early warning system'. Other castles formed a line of defence and communications between Kyūshū and Yamato along the Inland Sea, covering any likely advance in that direction, while Kikuchi in modern Kumamoto Prefecture provided logistical support for Kii and Ono. Yashima in Sanuki province on Shikoku Island was built on high ground overlooking Takamatsu Harbour at the other end of the Inland Sea. Long after the castle had disappeared this was to become the location of the famous battle of Yashima in 1184. Finally, Takayasu was erected in the Yamato homelands. All appear to have been completed within a two-year period.



The reconstructed one-storey barracks at Kikuchi Castle, which was probably built to provide logistic support for the other Korean-style castles of Kyūshū that were located on the 'front line'.

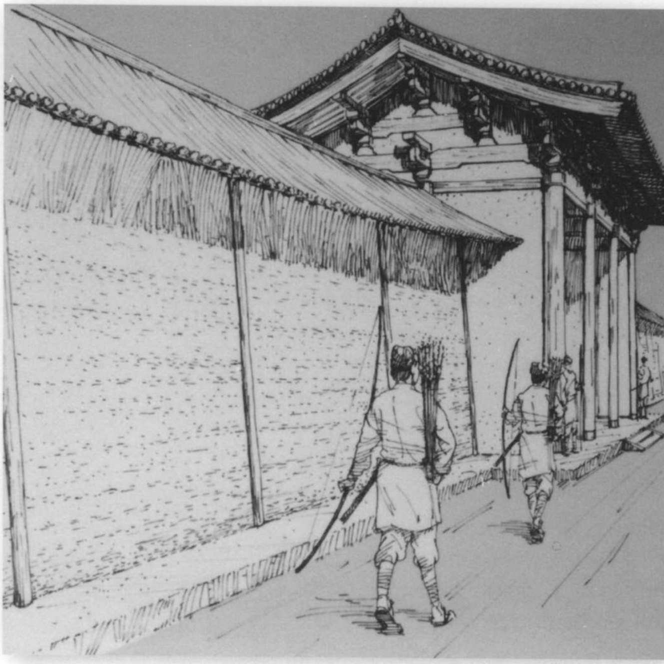
The castles continued to be maintained for over four decades, and there are records of construction and repairs of fortresses up to AD 701, but political changes on the Asian continent eventually made them redundant. After falling out with their Silla allies the Tang abandoned Korea altogether in AD 676, leaving the peninsula united under Silla. The Silla rulers were still very anti-Japanese, but without their powerful ally they were unable to pose a credible military threat. In AD 701 Takayasu Castle is noted as having been 'abolished', the immediate threat from China and Korea having subsided. There were to be further scares originating in China and Korea over the next two centuries, but none was sufficient to prompt a new phase of fortress construction. Threats to imperial stability now tended to come from the north of Japan, where some very different fortresses were built in response.

The northern fortresses

In addition to their involvement on the Korean Peninsula, the Yamato rulers faced a military threat in the north-east of Japan itself, where the strongest resistance to their assumption of control was to be found in Tōhoku, the distant territories that the Yamato called the provinces of Dewa and Mutsu. This was the land of the barbarians, whose savage ways precluded them from accepting the benevolent rule of the Yamato court. These truculent enemies are referred to as *emishi*, a term that does little to identify their racial origin, a matter that is still controversial to this day. They may have been identical to the Ainu, who still live on in Hokkaidō, but whatever their racial origins there is a clear implication that the *emishi* were 'beyond the pale' of Yamato civilization. Instead the *emishi* were despised as blood-drinking hole-dwelling savages by the Yamato rulers, whose written records show a great deal of contempt for them



Hotta no saku provides an excellent example of the northern model of a wooden stockaded fortress surrounding an administrative complex. Hotta is built on a low hill, and was surrounded by a wooden palisade, of which this section, which includes a fine gateway, has been reconstructed.



in every field except their military skills. In AD 724, for example, an *emishi* revolt took eight months to put down.

Yamato efforts to bring the *emishi* under their control began in the latter half of the 7th century AD, and accelerated following the creation of Nara as Japan's first permanent capital city in AD 710. From this time on the Yamato rulers may be referred to as the emperors of Japan. In an act of optimism over their future subjugation the designated provinces of Mutsu and Dewa were divided into administrative districts, and a long programme of conquest began. Its success was hindered by the policy of the imperial court of appointing submissive *emishi* chiefs as local rulers, a good idea that backfired when the process served to increase the chiefs' prestige and, as a direct consequence, their sense of independence and resistance.

ABOVE
A drawing of an alternative means of construction for a northern fortress. Here the wall is made of rammed earth with a weatherproof roof. (From a drawing in the Tōhoku History Museum, by kind permission)

Crucial to the pacification process was the establishment of fortifications. This time there were no Korean refugees to design fortresses for the Japanese, so instead of stone we find timber. The character '*saku*', which was often read as '*-ki*' and is usually translated as stockade or fort, is the word that is used for them in contemporary literature. It is an expression that conjures up realistic images of frontier forts built from earth and wood, and the pictorial character itself resembles a wooden palisade. Later on the more familiar ideograph read as either '*shiro*' or '*jō*' was adopted, but was still read as '*-ki*'. This character may be derived from a combination of Chinese characters indicating '*tsuchi kara naru*', or piling up soil, which was the action of creating an embankment from an excavated ditch.

Echigo Province, which bordered Dewa to the south, received two *saku* in AD 647 and 648. More were built in Mutsu and Dewa over the next two centuries; a slow pace of occupation that shows how cautiously the borders

BELOW
Akita was the administrative centre for Dewa Province and has been extensively excavated. This is the reconstructed eastern gateway, looking out. The gateway is of wood with rammed earth plastered walls.



of Yamato civilization crept northwards. The larger forts were not simply military bases. Instead they were centres of imperial state administration that acted as the outposts of centralized rule in enemy territory. As both forts and offices, these defended locations did not merely administer a territory but actively facilitated its creation. Settler families, who were referred to as 'stockade households' (*kinohe*), were transplanted to Dewa and Mutsu to work the lands around the fortified places, which also provided them with security in case of *emishi* attack. A network of smaller stockades linked the major bases.

The most important large stockade base was Fort Taga, which dated from AD 724 and was located to the east of the modern city of Sendai at the southern end of Mutsu Province. It served for many years as the provincial government headquarters for Mutsu and eventually grew to be more of a fortified palace, becoming known as Tagajō or 'Taga Castle', the same name as the modern town that now surrounds the site, rather than a stockade (Taga no saku). It was originally the site of the 'pacification headquarters' (Chinjō, later called Chinjufu), a revealing term that indicates how tenuous was the hold on Mutsu exerted by the imperial court at that time.

The corresponding headquarters for Dewa Province was Fort Akita (in modern Akita City), which lay deep in the province and was established in AD 733. A major military operation began in AD 737 when the Yamato attempted to cut a road between the two bases. Over the next 50 years Fort Monofu in Mutsu and Fort Okachi in Dewa were added in a process involving a total labour force of 8,000 men. The completion of Fort Iji in AD 767 was greatly resented by the local *emishi* and provoked an uprising. In AD 774, when these centres were all in place, a major initiative to crush the *emishi* began and lasted for 40 years. Five considerable expeditions followed in AD 776, 788, 794, 801 and 811, after which it was reckoned that the 'Grand Pacification Era', as it was dubbed, had come to a successful end.

Castles of the Heian Period

In AD 710 Nara became Japan's first permanent capital city. Its design was copied from that of Chang'an, the capital of the Tang dynasty on the site of the modern city of Xi'an. Recent archaeological studies have indicated that the original palace complex at Nara, called Heijō, was defended by a large wall very similar in design and construction to the walls of Taga and Akita. A wall was begun around Heian (Kyōto), the capital city that succeeded Nara in AD 794, but soon abandoned. Nor do we find any evidence of strong permanent watchtowers or heavily fortified gateways around Japanese capital cities. In the case of Kyōto this is perhaps surprising, because the Heian Period (AD 794–1192) belies its name as a time of 'peace and tranquillity'. A number of wars and revolts occurred, culminating in the Gempei War of 1180–85, but the only concession to defensive works within the capital itself would appear to be the erection of watchtowers on a temporary basis when imminent danger threatened, such as the revolt by the 'pirate king' Fujiwara Sumitomo in AD 940. On that occasion the climate of fear was such that the New Year ceremonies were conducted under armed guard. Otherwise the residences of the up-and-coming samurai class bore few defensive features.

There were nonetheless numerous incidents involving fortified places during the wars of the time, but these were fought around isolated stockade outposts that, like Kyōto's watchtowers, appear to have been erected initially as temporary strongholds while a campaign unfolded. The fortresses involved in

Ancient and early modern castles sites of Northern Japan: the Nara and Heian periods (AD 600-1200) and the Hōjō family castles, 1500–1590





This useful reconstruction at the Esashi Fujiwara Heritage Park is an attempt to recreate the main gateway of Abe Sadatō's Kawasaki Castle, the site of much fighting in 1057 during the Former Nine Years' War. It is made completely from wood, with sloping parapets and a small guardhouse.

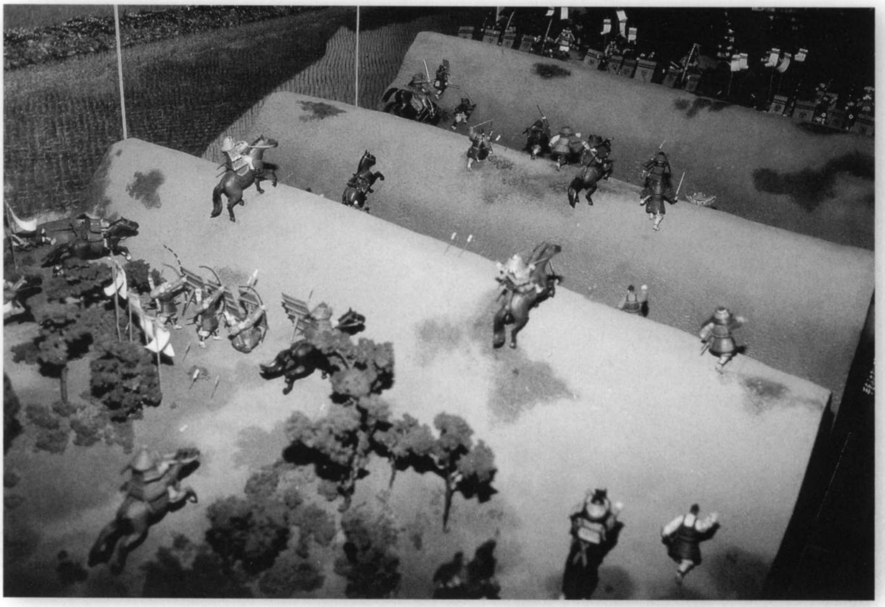
these struggles were very different from the ordered headquarters complexes such as Taga and Akita. Compared to those regular long walls of beaten earth they must have looked very rough and ready and resembled more the original *saku*, although some of the mountain strongholds could be very extensive, particularly if their use turned out to be prolonged.

One of the earliest examples of a stockade to see action, and one of the largest such complexes ever to be built, was Kuriyagawa, which was attacked during the *Zenkunen no eki*, the 'Former Nine Years' War' (1051–62). The bitter siege of Kanezawa, which bore the brunt of most of the fighting during the *Gosannen no eki* the 'Later Three Years' War' of 1083–87, also involved a stockade castle of considerable size. A century later the battle of Ichinotani in 1184, an epic struggle that became one of the most famous battles of the Gempei War, involved the defence of an elaborate stockade fortress between steep cliffs and the seashore near to modern Kobe.

This larger gateway at the Esashi Fujiwara Heritage Park represents a more elaborate from of entrance to a stockaded fortress of the Heian Period. We may imagine Kanezawa, the main battlefield of the Later Three Years' War, looking very much like this.



This simple model in Fukushima Prefectural Museum attempts to show the operation of the triple-ditched earthwork erected at Atsukashiyama by Fujiwara Kunihira to frustrate the advance north by Minamoto Yoritomi in 1189.



The Former Nine Years' War and the Later Three Years' War were fought in the north of Japan, but unlike the earlier expeditions against the *emishi*, where Taga and Akita had played the role of the outposts of civilization in barbarian lands, the fighting in and around the military stockades was conducted by rival samurai. These men tended to be either the descendants of *emishi* who had submitted to the Yamato and become integrated into the Japanese aristocracy, or were descended from warriors who had pacified the *emishi* and acquired their lands as a reward.

For example, the Former Nine Years' War, the first such encounter in which fortified places played a prominent role, was conducted on and off over a period of 12 years against a man who was effectively the last of the *emishi* chieftains. Abe Yoritoki's family had ruled over the six districts of Mutsu for three generations. Yoritoki was a member of the Heian establishment, and now collected taxes and kept the peace in that remote part of Japan as its hereditary district magistrate. It was Yoritoki's refusal to hand over the taxes he had collected, rather than any 'barbarian uprising', that led the court to appoint Minamoto Yoriyoshi to the position of Governor of Mutsu and General of the Military Headquarters at Taga with a commission to bring Yoritoki to heel.

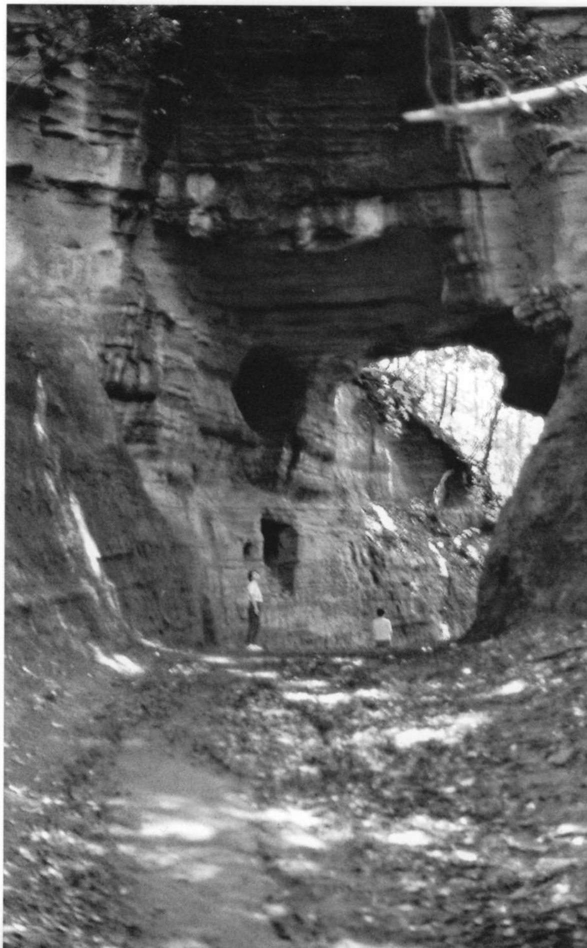
Early on in the campaign Abe Yoritoki was killed, but his son Abe Sadatō continued to resist, and during the winter of 1057 entrenched himself within a stockade fortress known as Kawasaki. There Minamoto Yoriyoshi attacked him during a blizzard. Sadatō successfully drove away the besiegers, who carried out a fighting retreat under the command of Yoriyoshi's son Yoshiie, a man who was to become one of the greatest heroes of the Minamoto family. In 1062 the Minamoto, reinforced by a local samurai leader called Kiyohara Mitsuyori, mounted a further campaign against Sadatō from the protection of Taga. A series of sieges of stockade fortresses followed, the Minamoto taking Toriumi and Kurosawajiri with a final showdown at Kuriyagawa, where an epic siege took place.

The Later Three Years' War also involved samurai fighting in and around stockade fortresses. This conflict was not an official government commission to chastise a rebel but rather a private war between Minamoto Yoshiie, the son

of the victorious Yoriyoshi from the Former Nine Years' War, and various members of the redoubtable Kiyohara family who had played a crucial role in ensuring the earlier Minamoto victory. The year 1086 was to find Minamoto Yoshiie besieging Kiyowara Iehira in the stockade fortress of Numa. While Yoshiie was regrouping Iehira was joined by his uncle Takehira, who advised a withdrawal to the stronger position of Kanezawa. It was a wise move, and Kanezawa held out until late in 1087. Many heads were taken during the fierce fighting, but as the government correctly regarded the operation as a private war no reward was forthcoming for Minamoto Yoshiie, so an angry Yoshiie threw the heads into a ditch rather than present them as trophies.

The family who benefited most from the wars in the north was the Fujiwara, whose 'northern branch', the Oshū Fujiwara were very proud of their *emishi* descent. Their later descendants proclaimed their acceptance of civilization by creating a cultured mini-kingdom of their own in Hiraizumi that was regarded as a 'little Kyōto'. Tsunekiyo, the first of the northern Fujiwara lords, fought and died alongside Abe Yoritoki at the start of the Former Nine Years' War. Fujiwara Kiyohira, Tsunekiyo's son, was adopted into the Kiyohara family and gained his independence from them in 1083. This was the beginning of the 'golden age' of the Oshū Fujiwara. Kiyohira died in 1128, having established at Hiraizumi the great Buddhist temple of Chūsonji (with its wonderful surviving Konjikidō or Golden Hall). His son Motohira was responsible for the construction of the temple of Mōtsuji, while the third Fujiwara lord Hidehira developed the site of the family's riverside mansion of Yanagi no Gosho, which, although a palace complex, was defended by walls and ditches in the finest style of the times.

The Shakado tunnel is one of the old man-made tunnels through the mountains that provided a natural defence for Kamakura.



Fujiwara Hidehira died in 1187, and two years later his son Yasuhira was to experience the destruction of the family and much of their aristocratic culture. This was brought about by Minamoto Yoritomo, Japan's first hereditary Shogun, in what was to some extent the last campaign against the *emishi,* or at least against their direct descendants. Ironically, Yoritomo was the descendant of Minamoto Yoriyoshi who had fought the first Fujiwara lord over a century earlier.

The conflict between the two families came about as follows. Minamoto Yoritomo had become the victor over the Taira family in the Gempei War of 1180–85, but his success had been brought about largely by his talented younger brother Yoshitsune. One of Minamoto Yoshitsune's most celebrated victories had been achieved against the fortified position of Ichinotani in 1184. The Taira had always been pre-eminent in sea fighting; due largely to their expertise in quelling pirates on the Inland Sea, and their base of Ichinotani was cleverly designed to give them ready access to ships from its stockade walls. These ships provided their means of escape when the Minamoto attacked along the beach and launched a surprise assault at the rear of the Ichinotani compound where it was lightly defended. The only access to it was down a steep

cliff path, so Yoshitsune led a daring assault using this dramatic entrance. The following year Yoshitsune's victory at Dannoura destroyed the Taira, but the jealous Minamoto Yoritomo then turned against Yoshitsune, who fled to the north of Japan and found sanctuary with the Fujiwara.

Faced by the advance north of Yoritomo's Army in 1189, Fujiwara Kunihira, Yasuhira's eldest son, took charge of the task of stalling the advance. To do this he resorted to a bold defensive measure by excavating a triple embankment earthwork with a double ditch over a distance of about 3km between the mountain of Atsukashiyama and the Atsukashi River. It resembled ancient Mizuki in everything but the water; although it was reinforced with watchtowers and defended by siege crossbows for the last time in Japanese history. It succeeded in stalling the Minamoto advance for only a short time. Fujiwara Kunihira was killed in the fighting, and not long afterwards his family's illustrious refugee, Yoshitsune, was finally defeated by Yoritomo at the battle of Koromogawa.

Castles of the Kamakura Period

Minamoto Yoritomo's triumph led to the establishment of Japan's first shogunate or military dictatorship under the nominal rule of the emperor. Yoritomo moved the administrative capital from Kyōto to Kamakura, so that the time from 1192 to 1333 is known as the Kamakura Period. Kamakura fronted on to the sea and was surrounded on three sides by mountains with the only access by land being a few easily defensible mountain passes or man-made tunnels carved out of the soft rock. A long earthwork that followed the line of the most prominent ridge augmented these natural fortifications. Two strategic stockade castles at Sugimoto in the centre of the fortifications and Sumiyoshi at the eastern end of the beach further strengthened the line. Kamakura thus became an unusual example of a Japanese fortified city, and its combination of natural and man-made defences served the place well when it was attacked in 1333. The investing army only broke in when a detachment under Nitta Yoshisada managed to make its way round the cape of Inamuragasaki at the western end of the beach at low tide. It was a move so unexpected by both sides that it was regarded as miraculous.



This simple relief model in the Memorial Museum at the Minatogawa Shrine in Kobe shows the defences erected by Kusunoki Masashige against the *shōgun*'s army. Note the rocks held up by ropes.



Several techniques used by Japanese carpenters in the construction of wooden castles are shown here in this scroll on display in the Ichijōdani Historical Museum near Fukui. In the bottom right a cutting line is being marked along a piece of timber using ink. Six men use adzes to smooth cut timber, while in the background more highly skilled carpenters produce the final finish using sharp blades.

Hardly any use seems to have been made of stone at Kamakura, even though fortifications built of stone had recently made a brief reappearance on the Japanese scene as a result of the attempt by Kublai Khan, the Yuan (Mongol) Emperor of China, to invade Japan in 1274. The experience of the first invasion prompted the Japanese to construct a number of long stone walls round Hakata Bay in 1275. Each had a sheer face on the outside but had a slope up from the rear so that horses could be ridden on to the parapet. The walls provided an archery base when the Mongols returned in 1281. The walls' location was only a short distance from the site of Mizuki, designed, of course, to counter a similar possible landing six centuries earlier. It is possible that Mizuki played a role in stopping the Mongol advance in 1274, because their first invasion, a fairly brief reconnaissance in force, involved burning the Hakozaki shrine on the road from Hakata Bay to Dazaifu. They then turned back, probably in the vicinity of Mizuki. It may be that the presence of the earthwork encouraged the withdrawal, but no attempt appears to have been made to restore that structure in 1275.

During the Nanbokuchō Wars (the Wars Between the Courts) of the 14th century, sieges were conducted against hilltop castles built predominantly of wood. Kasagiyama was the first such encounter, where the fantastically shaped natural rocks were augmented by man-made defences to provide a refuge for Emperor Go-Daigo, who had raised the standard of revolt against the *bakufu*, the shogunal government currently under the control of the Hōjō family. Go-Daigo then fled to the stronger position of Akasaka and then to Chihaya, where the mountaintop defences were in the capable hands of the great imperial loyalist Kusunoki Masashige. This was about the same time that the natural defences of Kamakura were being breached by the other imperial hero, Nitta Yoshisada, in 1333.

Mansions and mountains

The power of the *shōgun* was temporarily restored towards the end of the 14th century, but the latter half of the 15th century was to be characterized by the virtual collapse of the *shōgun's* authority as a result of the Onin War of 1467–77. This was a war fought in the streets of Kyōto that spread to the

This small area near the top of the mountain on which Omi-Hachiman Castle was built shows the nature of the typical *yamashiro*. In the foreground is the well, and we are looking down a steep path to one of the many gateways on the approach to the summit.



provinces, where opportunistic samurai leaders set up bases for themselves in defensible locations, usually mountaintops. These *yamashiro* (mountain castles) provided lookout posts and 'last-stand' refuges on neighbouring peaks.

In addition to mountaintop stockade castles, the other characteristic defended structure to be found at this time was the fortified mansion or *yashiki*. They ranged from simple structures to elaborate complexes built along river valleys. These princely locations had fortified gatehouses and watchtowers. Towns evolved around the mansions where artisans worked and tradesmen were established under the protection of the nearby *yamashiro*. This evolution from the Kamakura warrior residences and mountaintop stockades to complex wooden castles continued as the locus of power moved from the centre towards the localized control of *daimyō* (feudal lords), so that by the mid-16th century these warrior bases had become important political and military centres. Ichijōdani, the seat of the Asakura family, and Tsutsujigasaki, the moated mansion of Takeda Shingen, are two excellent examples.

At the same time, almost inevitably, many mountaintop castles tended to become as important as the mansions they were designed to support, although, contrary to popular belief, they did not necessarily replace the mansions entirely. As late as the 1560s, for example, we find a dual system whereby the actual living quarters of most castle complexes were located around the base of a mountain and linked to the mountaintop site by a series of footpaths and levelled areas. Omi-Hachiman consisted of two very distinct sites: a *yamashiro* on top of the mountain, and a growing castle town defended by moats and canals fed from Lake Biwa. Excellent examples are provided by the fortresses of the Hōjō family of Odawara, whose satellite castles in the Kantō plain, the area around modern Tokyo, show how cleverly the existing terrain could be utilized for defensive purposes. Hachigata made use of a prominent bluff overlooking a fast-flowing river, while Yamanaka dominated the narrow pass over the Hakone Mountains within sight of Mount Fuji. Takane Castle, a stronghold of the Takeda family, controlled a river valley in central Japan.

As many of the restored castle sites in Japan have been rebuilt only on the top of hills, the erroneous impression has sometimes been given that no other structure ever existed. In fact even fortified sites built from very simple materials could exist across a very wide area, the ultimate design technique being literally

to carve up a mountaintop into a series of interlocking baileys reinforced with massive stone cladding. The Hōjō's Yamanaka Castle shows how natural depressions could become strategic ditches and moats. Once keeps and massive gatehouses were added, the final classic form of the Japanese castle was created. So warlike were the times that Kyōto itself acquired defensive walls and ditches during the 16th century, although these were never as elaborate as the castle sites of the individual *daimyō*, whose massive castles with graceful tower keeps were to take Japanese military architecture into the 17th century.

CHRONOLOGY

AD 297	Japanese fortifications are described in the *Wei Zhi*
AD 369	Traditional date when Japanese colony of Mimana established in Korea
AD 618	First reference to *ōyumi* (siege crossbows)
AD 645	Taika Reform
AD 663	Japanese forces defeated at the battle of the Baekcheon River
AD 664	Mizuki 'water castle' is built
AD 665	Ono and Kii castles built
AD 667	Takayasu, Yashima and Kaneda castles built
AD 668	Korean Peninsula is united under the anti-Japanese Silla Kingdom
AD 701	Takayasu is abandoned
AD 710	Nara becomes Japan's first permanent capital
AD 724	Taga Castle built
AD 733	Akita Castle built
AD 737	Road-building between Taga and Akita leads to conflict
AD 774	Attack on Monofu Castle leads to the 'Great Pacification Era'
AD 801	Campaign by Sakanoue Tamuramaro
AD 802	Isawa Castle built
AD 811	Pacification of *emishi* officially completed
1057	Siege of Kawasaki in the Former Nine Years' War
1062	Siege of Kuriyagawa
1087	Minamoto Yoshiie's siege of Kanezawa in Later Three Years' War
1180	Gempei War begins
1184	Battle of Ichinotani
1189	Last recorded use of *ōyumi* in Japan at Atsukashiyama
1275	Building of stone wall round Hakata Bay against Mongol invasion
1331	Siege of Kasagi
1332	Sieges of Akasaka and Chihaya
1333	Fall of Kamakura
1467	Ditches and palisades used during the Onin War
1495	Fall of Odawara to the Hōjō.
1516	Siege of Arai
1535	Outer moat of Yusuki Castle built
1536	Fall of Sakasai Castle to the Hōjō



At Omi-Hachiman an extensive castle town developed at the foot of the mountain on which the population's last-ditch defence, Omi-Hachiman *yamashiro*, was built. The town was further defended by a series of moats and canals fed from the waters of Lake Biwa.

In the foreground of this view of Yoshinogari is the 'V'-shaped moat and palisade that provided the main defence for the site.



DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

The following section covers the design and development of the different styles of Japanese fortified places introduced in the historical survey above. It is illustrated by reference to certain key sites that are representative of their type either through preservation, written records, archaeological investigation or modern reconstruction. One important consideration to bear in mind about these early Japanese castles is that they rarely stood alone, but that each existed as one element within a complex defensive system. The degree of elaboration of such a system depended upon several factors, which are best illustrated by looking at a number of typical examples.

Yoshinogari as a fortified Yayoi settlement

Yoshinogari is not only a very important archaeological site. It is also one of Japan's newest and busiest tourist attractions. What is the explanation for this enthusiasm? It would appear that the discovery of Yoshinogari and the richness of its finds filled a gap in the consciousness of the Japanese people concerning their own cultural heritage. The small non-military Yayoi site of Toro, excavated just after World War II, had given the Japanese a sense of ancient identity that was sorely needed at the time. Yoshinogari, being a complex and wealthy settlement ruled by a king or chieftain, promised more richness

Two reconstructed rice storehouses on the site of Yoshinogari. They have large overhanging straw roofs. The modern staircase is the only non-authentic reconstruction.



of heritage, and has not disappointed. Speculation that Yoshinogari might actually be the capital of the kingdom ruled over by Princess Himiko has added enormously to the site's popularity.

Yoshinogari seems to have been settled throughout the Yayoi Period, but it is in the Middle and Late Yayoi that we find the key component of the Yoshinogari site, which is a large moated settlement with indisputably defensive features extending over an area of 25 hectares. The outer moat of Yoshinogari is V-shaped and fronted by a reverse-trapezoidal-shaped earth embankment constructed from soil brought up from the ditch. Wooden posts were set along this mound as a further defence. The maximum width of the moat was about 6.3m and about 3m deep. The embankment was between 2.5 and 3m wide and 2m high. An inner moat with a flat bottom encircles the inner settlement where more than 100 Middle to Late Yayoi pit buildings were found, while the space between them was occupied by storehouses. The Yoshinogari storehouses are unusually large compared to other known examples.



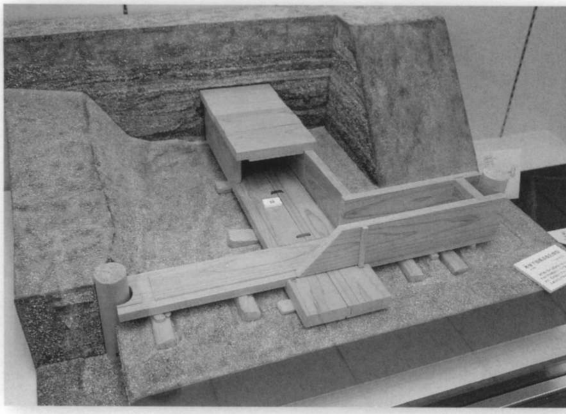
One of the four huge watchtowers in the South Inner Palace enclosure at Yoshinogari. It was the discovery of these towers that led to speculation that Yoshinogari might be the site of Queen Himiko's palace because similar structures are described in the Chinese dynastic histories.

There are also a considerable number of jar burials on the site. The broken points of stone swords were found in two of the jars, and were probably embedded in the corpses when they were interred. In one other jar were 12 arrowheads, while a further corpse was headless. All these finds have been accepted as evidence of warfare around the Yoshinogari site. The Minami Naiku (South Inner Palace) is believed to be the area where the *taijin* (rulers) of Yoshinogari lived and carried out their administrative duties. Houses, kitchens and an assembly hall have been identified.

Apart from the fence and ditches, the most striking defensive structures at Yoshinogari are the massive watchtowers. The identification comes from the strategic positions occupied by the posthole groups. The *Wei Zhi* account of Princess Himiko's domain says that she dwelt in a settlement surrounded by watchtowers, a description that is uncannily like Yoshinogari. There are two types of tower. The smaller type, built using four uprights, either act as fortified gateways straddling the entrance across a moat, or are built immediately adjacent to an entrance. In the reconstruction they have been given no roofs, just a flat horizontal platform with a wooden parapet round the outside, and there are no actual gates in the gateway opening. The larger types are enormous roofed structures raised on six uprights. Here the horizontal platform is completely covered by a thatched canopy that extends just outside the parapet. In the process of reconstruction steps have been added for the safety of modern visitors, but are of a design that would probably not have been found during the Yayoi Period. There are four such watchtowers within the Minami Naiku. The northern watchtower is of different design from the others in than it has an offset central pillar that allows a larger deck on top. This unique design, and the fact that it overlooks the north burial mound and the north inner palace, has provoked suggestions that it had a special function.

The Korean-style fortresses

Dazaifu, the regional seat of government for Kyūshū, was protected against a possible Chinese or Korean invasion by a complex defensive system. Aerial





ABOVE LEFT
A model in the Historical Museum on the site of the former Dazaifu regional headquarters showing the ingenious system of wooden conduits that drained rainwater from the inner (Dazaifu) side of Mizuki and channelled it into the wet moat on the Hakata side.

ABOVE RIGHT
The site of the Korean-style Ono Castle extends around the ridge of the mountain to the rear of this picture. It is viewed here from the site of the regional headquarters at Dazaifu, which Ono was built to protect.

views of the area show how natural features were used and augmented to create a 'Maginot Line' – a planned battlefield where an invading enemy could be stalled and then driven back into the sea. Dazaifu, now a modern city of modest size, lies inland from the major modern metropolis of Fukuoka that sprawls around the shore of Hakata Bay. As Hakata Bay provides shallow water and a huge sheltered anchorage protected from the ocean by the island of Shiga, it was natural to assume that this would be the preferred landing point for a continental invasion. So it was to prove with the Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281, but the defensive strategy adopted during the 7th century AD was very different. The whole accent was not on preventing a landing, but containing an enemy's advance against Dazaifu.

Dazaifu itself was a palace-like complex surrounded by walls much like the arrangement found in Nara. Like Nara, it was built to a design copied from the Tang dynasty capital at Chang'an. It lay on flat land at the foot of a prominent mountain along the natural line of communication from Hakata Bay to the south. More mountains rose on its southern side, so the extraordinary Mizuki filled the gap between them. Two similar embankments, the Ko mizuki (little water fortress) and the Kasuga embankment, closed off the two valleys immediately to the west. Two further dry earthworks existed even further west.

As noted above, Mizuki was built in AD 664. It was originally 1.2km long, 80m wide and 10m high. The name 'water fortress' comes from the moat on the outer, Hakata side. This was originally 60m wide and 4m deep. The water level was kept topped up in two ways, first by the waters of the river that passed through a gap in the embankment on its way to the sea, and second by a clever drainage system that allowed water to flow down from the Dazaifu side under the structure. The huge pipes were made from massive wooden planks expertly dovetailed and held in place by iron clamps. The collecting channel ran at a right angle to the entrance to the pipe and was anchored by large tree trunks buried in the ground to give stability. The pipe (or pipes – it is unclear how many there were) would have been put in place before the embankment was finished, and archaeological study has

BELOW
An elevated rice storehouse reconstructed on the site of Kikuchi Castle.



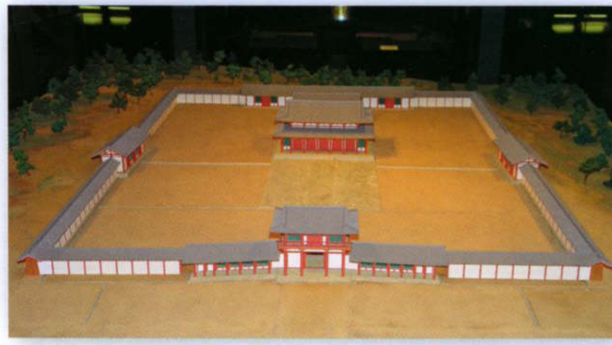
shown how successive layers of earth were beaten down on top of one another. The finished Mizuki would have been crossed at least once along its length by a road protected by a gatehouse.

In addition to these earthworks Dazaifu was defended by two castles built in the style of a Korean *sanseong* on the two adjacent mountains. Ono Castle lay on Shiōjiyama to the north and was built in AD 665. In typical Korean fashion all the vegetation was cleared from the top of the mountain and a serpentine stone wall erected that followed the contours to give a complete defensive perimeter, 8km in total circumference. The walls would have been of two sorts: earthworks built from rammed layers of soil, as well as walls of dry stone construction at the most strategic points, such as gateway entrances along valleys. These stone walls had a smooth outer surface built with a gentle slope on the outside around a rammed rubble core. Very simple buildings were erected inside the enclosed area, although the gates would have been quite elaborate with pavilions on top. A simple wooden palisade existed outside the wall. Nowadays all that remains are small sections of the stone and earth walls, as well as the foundation stones of 70 buildings. Kii Castle to the south was very similar.



One of the finest reconstructed buildings in Japan is the drum tower at Kikuchi Castle. It is very much in the continental style, and resembles a contemporary Sui or Tang dynasty Chinese pagoda.





LEFT
Hotta Castle was built on a low hill. The reconstructed gateway seen in an earlier photograph is just visible in the low foreground. The rectangular *seichō* is completely surrounded by an almost elliptical inner defence wall round the edge of the hill.

RIGHT
This model in the Tōhoku Historical Museum is of the *seichō* that formed a neat rectangle in the Chinese style within the immense outer defences of Fort Taga. The main building in the middle was called the *seiden*. The layout of Dazaifu, the regional headquarters in Kyūshū that the Korean-style fortresses were built to defend, was very similar but on a much larger scale. Every official building complex dating from the Nara Period can trace its ultimate inspiration to Chang'an, the capital of the Tang dynasty of China.

Kii and Ono were the first castles to be built in a programme that was to see eight other similar structures added over the next few years. The most dramatic location belonged to Kaneda Castle (Kanata no ki) on the island of Tsushima. It lies on the highest point of a promontory that projects in a northerly direction into the sea on the southern of the two islands that make up Tsushima. Dramatic slopes extend down on all sides, giving watch over the sea and the river valley to the south-east. The site is so inaccessible that it can have had little use other than as a defensible observation post. Nevertheless neat stone walls in the Korean style still survive, even though they are only accessible after a very steep 30-minute climb.

In marked contrast we find the fortress of Kikuchi in Kumamoto Prefecture, which is located on a low hill. This site has yielded a wealth of archaeological information, and now sports a number of reconstructed buildings including storehouses and a spectacular octagonal wooden drum tower. Kikuchi Castle's function would appear to have been that of providing logistical support to Dazaifu in the form of food, weapons and soldiers from a location way behind the 'front line'. A posting to Kikuchi may well have been regarded as a 'cushy number' compared to windswept Tsushima! The complex appears to have been divided into a number of areas, modestly defended by wooden palisades and containing rice storehouses, weapon stores, barracks buildings and the like. A rammed earth wall enclosed the overall complex, strengthened at vulnerable points with stone walls and fortified gates just as in the case of Ono and Kii. The gates must have been very heavy, as shown by the holes of the pivots, which are carved into massive stones that have survived. The storehouses are built on raised piles and have thatched roofs. The barracks are one-storey buildings with shingle roofs. The drum tower is the most interesting feature of the site. It is of three-storey construction and resembles a Chinese pagoda.

The northern castles

The *saku* (palisaded forts) in Dewa and Mutsu were not the only buildings to be created by the Yamato on the borders of their civilization, because as the growing

A THE DEFENSIVE SYSTEM AROUND THE REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS OF DAZAIFU: AD 680

The fear of an invasion from Korea during the 7th century AD led to the creation of an elaborate defensive system around Dazaifu, the regional headquarters in Kyūshū close to the most likely place where an invasion would start. In this plate we are looking across the Korean-style Kii Castle to the river valley where Dazaifu is located and on to Ono Castle on the mountain beyond. The gap between the mountains is filled by Mizuki, a moated embankment. The sources for the plate are the excavations and reconstructions in the Dazaifu area.

A

The defensive system around the regional headquarters of Dazaifu: AD 680





Yamato state expanded towards the north we begin to see the establishment of aristocratic dwellings in places far distant from the centre of power. Sometime around the middle of the 6th century AD Mitsudera was created in Gumma Prefecture. Excavations have revealed it to be a moated settlement arranged on a very formal rectangular basis. But was Mitsudera a fortified place? This is by no means clear, and the safest term to use for places like Mitsudera is to describe them as 'elite residences', leaving the question of fortifications unanswered until further evidence becomes available.

ABOVE
This bas-relief is to be found at the park near Gosannen that is built on the site of Minamoto Yoshiie's siege headquarters during the siege of Kanezawa in 1087. It is based on a section from the contemporary painted scroll of the Later Three Years' War. A defender is looking out from a watchtower that has sloping sides and is festooned with arrows that have been loosed against it. Important defensive features are the rocks secured by ropes that pass over a tree trunk. When the ropes are cut the rocks will fall on any attacker who may be climbing up.

By contrast, the identification of fortified places becomes less problematic at places where the Yamato civilization begins to encounter the *emishi*. Unlike the Dazaifu defensive complex in Kyūshū, which was designed to protect Japanese territory against foreign aggression, the northern castles developed as a dynamic system designed to advance the borders of the Japanese state into hostile territory. Nevertheless, although different in intent, we see some striking similarities, particularly in the design of the administrative buildings located safely within the defensive walls. As the major forts of Akita and Taga grew to become regional centres their outer walls began to shelter complexes of administrative buildings that resembled Dazaifu on a smaller scale. Most of the northern forts were built on flat land, although Forts Taga and Hotta were built on hills.

The typical northern castle combined defensive works with an administrative centre, the usual arrangement being a long outer perimeter wall set some considerable distance from the civilian buildings within. At Fort Monofu the outer wall enclosed an area of 2.8km^2, while the inner wall measured 72m north to south and 116m east to west. Unlike the Korean-style fortifications of Kyūshū, these northern castles made no use of stone other than as foundations. Instead





These two linked buildings make up the *shinden* (chief dwelling) of the reconstructed residence of Fujiwara Kunihira, who died in 1128, at the Esashi Fujiwara Heritage Park. They add a touch of comfort to what is otherwise a very austere frontier stockade similar to the fort owned by his father Tsunekiyo. The 'golden age' of the Oshū Fujiwara is regarded as having begun with Fujiwara Kiyohira.

the main means of construction was rammed earth above a shallow foundation of undressed stone. It was a technique that was also to be found in the government buildings of Nara and Dazaifu. The soil, dug from a depth sufficient to guarantee that no seeds would be present, was carried to the site in a bag slung from a bamboo pole resting on the shoulders of two men. Here it would be mixed with water and carried up ladders to the latest layer. The overall shape of the wall, which was of trapezoidal cross section to give stability, was marked out by a series of scaffolding poles. When the mix was tipped in wooden shuttering held it in place, just like modern concrete, but instead of simply waiting for it to set, each layer was rammed down by a team of men. The presence of sand and perhaps shells in the mix produced a very strong wall when it dried out. When one length of wall was complete the next along was begun, and the joins can still be discerned on excavated sections. The final stage was to give it a coating of plaster and add a tiled roof to weatherproof it. The tiles were laid across wooden trusses set at intervals along the wall. When done with precision the resulting construction was both neat and attractive, and its clean rectangular lines contrasted with the curved surface of the Korean-style stone walls in Kyūshū.

Other buildings within the compound were made in a similar way or could make more use of wood, whereby vertical posts resting on foundation stones gave the overall shape for the building, to which lath and plaster walls were added between the verticals, with a more extensive tiled roof. So, for example, the innermost part of Akita castle – the *seichō* (government office) – consisted of five buildings within a precise rectangular courtyard arranged like a 'five' in dominoes. The building in the middle was called the *seiden*. The *seichō* lay in the middle of a wide area enclosing 550m^2 and encircled by a defensive wall of beaten earth 2.1m high. Here no attempt was made to keep to a strict rectangular shape. There were two right-angled corners, but otherwise the wall was curved and followed the contours of the landscape as in the Korean models. The East Gate of Akita's outer wall has been reconstructed. It is of a simple but sturdy construction in the middle of a horizontal section of wall. The roof was given overhanging eaves that protect the actual entrance.

A very different style of outer wall is to be found at nearby Hotta. Here the modern reconstruction shows a wooden wall of stout vertical planking topped off by a horizontal beam. The fortified gate is a very impressive structure. It is built entirely of wood and is of two storeys. The lower part covers the entrance and is reminiscent of Akita except for its lack of colour. The upper storey has a projecting defensive walkway around it within a parapet. The inner *seiden*, however, is just like Akita's, being of rectangular shape although on a low hill. However, Hotta's *seiden* lies within not one but two outer walls, each the shape of an irregular ellipse. Archaeological investigation has revealed that some sections of this wall were of stone.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM
This reconstruction at the Esashi Fujiwara Heritage Park is of the fortified east gate contemporary with Fujiwara Tsunekiyo, who fought during the Former Nine Years' War. It is very similar to the reconstruction of the gate of Kawasaki on the same site. We are looking from the outside in.

The most impressive *seiden* of all was to be found at Taga, which was founded in AD 724. Tagajō began life as a rough outpost and evolved into what was effectively a fortified town. As befitted the major fortress in northern Japan, the headquarters building of Taga was a splendid rectangular courtyard with gates at the four points of the compass and a fine two-storeyed building at its centre. Another office building lay just behind it. Several sections of Taga's very long perimeter wall have survived and show it to be of rammed earth construction, although use was also made at places along its great length of planking walls. Its fortified gatehouses were very similar to those at Hotta, but Taga also sported fighting towers that straddled the walls. These simple openwork lookout towers consisted of a platform built over the length of the tiled wall, held in place by large vertical posts on either side of the wall. Access to the fighting platform was by means of a trapdoor and a ladder from the inside of the wall.

Mansions and fortresses of the Heian Period

With the Heian Period two further types of defended buildings emerge. First, we see the development of quite sophisticated warrior residences. Some are the homes of low-ranking samurai and have only rudimentary defensive features, if they have any at all. A typical warrior's home would have been a fairly simple farmhouse of a size commensurate with his rank, and differed only from the homes of samurai in Kyōto in its more rural construction and its proximity to the owner's rice fields. These *yakata* (samurai mansions) would have been built on low ground or on an elevated plot near to the fields. Rough wooden fences



Fujiwara Hidehira died in 1187, just two years before Minamoto Yoritomo attacked the glorious Fujiwara capital of Hiraizumi. It is to Hidehira that we owe the completion of the fortified palace of Yanagi no Gosho, which in envisaged at the Esashi Fujiwara Heritage Park by this stunning reconstruction of a mansion in the *shinden-zukuri* style.

B GUARD DUTY AT THE NORTHERN CASTLE OF TAGAJŌ: AD 700

Tagajō was the regional command centre for Mutsu Province in the north of Japan, built, like all the other northern stockades, to pacify and control the *emishi*. In this plate we see the outer wall of Tagajō, which is crossed by a large but simple lookout tower where an *ōyumi* (giant crossbow) has been installed. Built into the wall is a flushing toilet, which is currently in use. The sources for the plate are the excavations and reconstructions at Tagajō, Akita, Hotta and the Tōhoku History Museum. The crossbow is based on Chinese models that resemble the written descriptions of Japanese *ōyumi*.

B Guard duty at the northern castle of Tagajō: AD 700





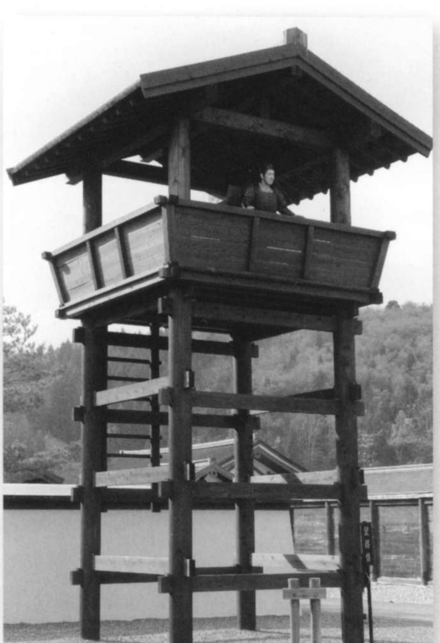
A detail in the form of an inner courtyard of the hypothetical *shinden-zukuri* mansion of Fujiwara Hidehira at Esashi.

marked their boundaries, which were often surrounded by water-filled ditches crossed by simple bridges. Gates had thatched roofs to protect them against the weather, as did the simple main buildings. Yet none of these features could be regarded as a military structure. This was a role exercised solely by the large stockades where the warriors gathered in times of war, and it was to be another century before the two types of building merged. A *yakata* appears on a painted scroll called *Ippen hijiri e*, which dates from the 13th century. The scene is of the priest Ippen visiting a warrior's mansion, which is very well defended with strong wooden walls.

The most important type of fortified building during the Heian Period were the temporary mountain stockades that emerge during the Former Nine Years' War and the Later Three Years' War. From the first of these conflicts we have a literary description of the fortresses, and from the second we have a pictorial record. The *Mutsuwaki* (*Tale of Mutsu*) is a near-contemporary literary work that was probably based on eyewitness reports from samurai who had served in the Former Nine Years' War. For pictorial sources we find fortifications featured three times on a contemporary picture scroll of the Later Three Years' War. The *Mutsuwaki* makes it clear that the defences associated with these fortresses could be quite extensive, when it notes that: 'The rebels had blocked the trails with felled trees and obstructed the roads with debris from the banks of the river, which persistent rain had swollen to flood stage'. There is also a good account of how the site of the fortresses made use of the local topography:

> Sadatō had built his stronghold, Kuriyagawa Stockade, on a site adjoined on the north and the west by a great swamp and on the other two sides by rivers with sheer impassable banks more than three *jō* [about 10m] high. Fierce warriors manned its towers, and it was separated from the rivers by dry trenches bristling with upturned knives. The surface of the ground was strewn with caltrops.

This fine reconstruction of a Heian Period watchtower is at the Esashi Fujiwara Heritage Park. Such buildings would have been found at all Heian Period castles such as Ichinotani.



These literary descriptions are reflected in the pictorial sources. In one section of the *Gosannen kassen emaki* we see a very clear depiction of a fighting tower. It projects over the wall like a smaller version of the ones at Taga. Its parapet walls are very solid and come up to the chest of the defender. They have a definite slope outwards to make it difficult for an attacker to climb, and in the course of the battle the outer surfaces have become festooned with arrows that have lodged in the planking. The tower appears to have no parapet on the inside, presumably to allow quick access by the defenders. The walls themselves are of rough plaster construction within a timber framework, probably made from 'wattle and daub' rather than beaten earth because they are quite narrow, and a temporary base such as this would not allow the time to construct the elaborate walls such as those at Akita and Taga. The most interesting feature on the walls is a series of three square loopholes. These are apparently not for archers because they are placed low down on the wall's surface. Ropes pass through them, suspending heavy rocks. The ropes are passed over horizontal tree trunks and are tied to posts within the castle, so that they can be cut at the appropriate moment to let the rocks fall against attackers. In another section of the scroll a fight is going on around a tower. Here the details are not as clear, but the wall appears to be made from horizontal wooden planking rather than plaster. One rock is suspended by a rope through a very narrow hole. A further section of the scroll shows the fortress burning. Here we see plastered walls but with a loophole set at head height. Flames are billowing out of it and cracking the surface of the plaster.

For some remarkable reconstructions of these styles of fortress one need look no further than the Esashi Fujiwara no Sato, the 'Fujiwara Heritage Park', built near the city of Esashi in Iwate prefecture. This extensive site began life as a film set, and has been preserved to show visitors the architecture and lifestyles of the Oshū Fujiwara family. As it is not an archaeological site like Yoshinogari the designers have had full rein to include numerous buildings that cover several styles of architecture over several centuries. The emphasis in the first section of the site is on Fujiwara Tsunekiyo, who died at the start of the Former Nine Years' War, and his son Kiyohira, the first Fujiwara to set the family on the path to greatness. Their age, the late 11th century, is commemorated by a wooden fortress, of which visitors encounter first the purely defensive features.

Tsunekiyo's fortress is approached through its east gate. Like all the other gates in the display, this resembles the illustration in the picture scroll of the Later Three Years' War in that it has a parapet that slopes outwards. As it is a fortified gatehouse it is of strong construction, and has a guardroom above the gate. The parapet extends all the way round the tower, and a ladder through a trap door provides access. Other gates in the fortress are quite simple with supporting beams. All the walls of the fortress are of wood, either horizontal planking or rough vertical timbers. The separate gateways of the isolated fortresses are very similar in construction but wider and stronger.

This model of fortified tower gateway was to be used for the next three centuries, taking us into the Kamakura Period. Modifications that may be noted include the insertion of square loopholes into the sloping parapet, and the augmentation of the

Castle defenders rush to man a gate tower of Ichinotani in 1184 as depicted on a painted screen in the Watanabe Museum in Tottori. Access is by means of a ladder. Note the use of the heavy cloths to catch arrows and to screen the interior from the enemy. They are dyed red, the colour associated with the Taira family.



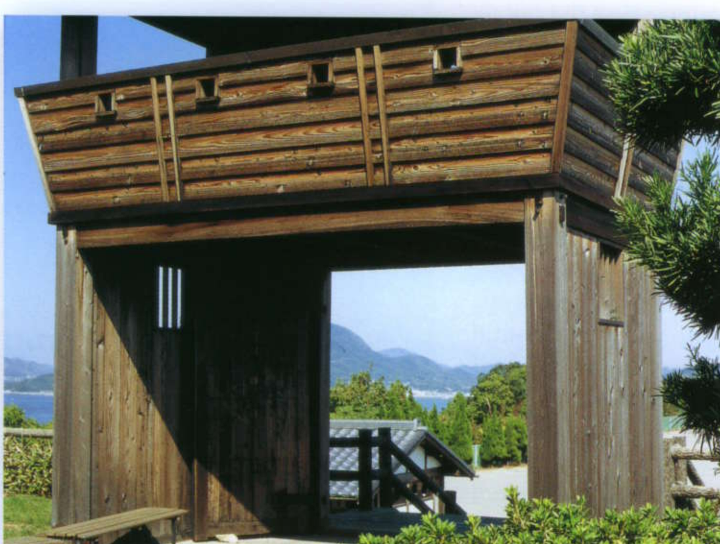
parapet wall by using the familiar large wooden shields set up on battlefields. These raised the height of the parapet by a small amount. Another defensive device was to increase the height of the outer walls by suspending rough bamboo or straw matting from wooden frameworks. Other pictorial sources show the hanging of heavy cloths bearing the defenders' *mon* (family crest) from frameworks above a gate. These curtains were called *maku*, and were used on a battlefield to mark off the general's field headquarters position. Just like the rough bamboo or straw matting the *maku* would catch spent arrows and prevented an attacker from looking inside a fortress from any elevated position nearby. At the Fujiwara Heritage Park two almost identical isolated gateways are set away from the main fortress. They are supposed to represent the gateways of Kawasaki, where the Former Nine Years' War began, and Kuriyagawa, where it ended. All in all, it is a superb display of reconstructed Heian Period military architecture.

One addition to the overall fortification pattern that seems to have appeared later in the Heian Period was the free-standing multi-storeyed watchtower. These structures would become very common during the Sengoku Period, when they were built to a considerable height. Those of the Heian Period resembled the watchtowers of Yoshinogari except that they did not have thatched roofs but planking, and the outward-sloping parapet of the gatehouses. An example of a free-standing watchtower is included at the Fujiwara Heritage Park.

The warrior residence and the *shinden* style

Within the defensive walls at the Fujiwara reconstruction we find a *shinden* (chief dwelling) the classic domestic style of the early Heian Period. The *shinden* style, which is essentially an elaboration of the simpler samurai's *yakata*, was developed in the capital when the court nobility were given rectangular plots of land around and below the imperial enclosure. The size of the plot depended upon the recipient's rank. The resulting dwelling was based, like the imperial palace itself, on a Chinese model, with an initial symmetry from left to right but not from top to bottom. The mansion-estate centred round the actual 'chief dwelling', which faced south on to an open courtyard. Subsidiary buildings would be attached to the *shinden* by covered corridors, or could be free-standing within the courtyard. A garden might be included. Movable screens provided visual privacy within the *shinden*. The formal entrance to the courtyard was always the eastern gate, where the officers and guards were stationed. The courtyard inside the fortified gateway at Esashi is complete with living quarters, stables and gates, latrines and wells. The storehouses, which are raised on piles to keep the rice dry, stand in a separate compound outside the inner area. The lord's own living quarters consist of two one-storey buildings connected to each other.

At the historical park on the island of Hakatajima in the Inland Sea is this good reconstruction of a Kamakura Period fortified gateway, with the characteristic sloping sides.





Towards the end of the Heian Period we see the building of large fortified palaces typified by the elegant Yanagi no Gosho of the Oshū Fujiwara. These are sophisticated residences placed securely within genuinely defensive walls and fortified gateways. As one purpose of the Esashi Fujiwara Heritage Park is to show that the northern branch of the Fujiwara was every bit as sophisticated and refined as their cousins in the capital, this elaborate style of mansion has also been reconstructed and represents the home of Fujiwara Hidehira, who died in 1187. Given the name of Kyara Gosho (aloes wood palace) it is an attempt to realize the vanished glories of Yanagi no Gosho, the large fortified palace of the Fujiwara in their capital of Hiraizumi. It is built in the *shinden-zukuri* style, which represents an elaboration of the *shinden* style both in overall size but also in its introduction of native Japanese features to the original Chinese style. It was less of a clear-cut model than an ideal to be realized by incorporating features that expressed beauty and charm and demonstrated its integration into the natural or created environment. Yet even Yanagi no Gosho needed defending. A wooden palisade surrounded it with bridges over a moat. When danger threatened security could be enhanced by the simple expedient of removing a section of planking from the bridge.

The best visual record of the *shinden-zukuri* style that has survived is the picture scroll *Nenjū-gyōji* of the 12th century. One section of it depicts a cockfight inside the courtyard of such a mansion, but as the location is a nobleman's home in Kyōto no defensive features are to be found. They are also absent from the reconstruction at Esashi, making the point that the century that had passed since the Former Nine Years' War had seen the Fujiwara established as elegant aristocrats and patrons of the arts. Thus the reconstructed mansion of the Fujiwara has a pond garden across the courtyard from its main buildings, which are very elaborate compared to the earlier Fujiwara residence. Subsidiary living quarters are attached using short covered corridors that enclose small courtyard gardens.

The choice of Kasagi as the first refuge for Emperor Go-Daigo may have had more to do with its religious significance than with the actual or potential strength of its defences. This pictorial map at the entrance to Kasagidera, the temple that is now built in the site, shows how it was a typical Japanese *yamashiro*.

The 14th-century *yamashiro*

Some of the most vivid sections in *Taiheiki*, the epic about the 'Wars Between the Courts' of the 14th century, are concerned with the defence of mountaintop castles, for which the name *yamashiro* (mountain castle) is increasingly used. Go-Daigo's first refuge on top of the mountain at Kasagi may well have been chosen because of its spiritual power, symbolized by the huge carvings of Buddha on its cliff faces, rather than its military strength, because it fell quite easily to a night raid. This is described in the *Taiheiki*, which includes the following account of Kasagiyama. The 'rocks like folding screens' are still a feature of the site:

> ... The 50 men began to climb at the northern ramparts of the castle, a rock wall 450m high, where even a bird could not fly easily. By various ways they went up for 225m until with perplexed hearts they beheld rocks like folding screens, rising in layers above them in place of smooth green moss and ancient pines with drooping limbs.

The loyalist hero Kusunoki Masashige more successfully defended Akasaka and Chihaya. Several accounts deal with his clever stratagems, which will be discussed in the operational history section, although we find little actual description of the castles in *Taiheiki*. The following brief section, concerning Chihaya, emphasizes the steepness of the approaches to it:

> Now there were deep chasms eastward and westward of this castle, so that a man might not climb up, while northward and southward it stood over against Mount Kongō in a region of high and steep peaks. Yet the attackers looked upon it scornfully, for it was a small castle, barely 200m high and not a league around.

The construction of Akasaka and Chihaya was almost entirely of wood, and most probably they resembled the wooden stockades of the Heian Period, with use being made of wooden walls and fortified gateways in a series of interlocking baileys spread across several mountain peaks. Mountain paths would link the different sections. Chihaya was built upon a particularly high mountain ridge. As noted earlier, Kasagi, the first such fortress to be defended by loyalist troops, made use of the natural rock outcrops that exist on Kasagiyama, a feature absent from both Akasaka and Chihaya.

Each of the imperial loyalist fortresses stood alone with no notion of a defensive system. They were simply a refuge and strongpoint for the emperor or his followers. The accounts of Kusunoki Masashige's cunning ruses involved the use of suspended stones and ropes as noted earlier, with nothing in their overall design that indicates technological innovation. Indeed, these fortresses were largely a development of the earlier models found during the Former Nine Years' War.



One of the massive rocks at Kasagi that have images of the Buddha carved into them. These rocks are described in *Taiheiki*, but did not hinder a night attack against Go-Daigo.





Ichijōdani and the development of the castle town

From the time of the Onin War onwards we begin to see the creation of fortified sites that reflect the preoccupations of the new *daimyō*. As these warlords had risen to power by force of arms and owed their survival to the extent to which they could defend themselves on one hand, and successfully steal their neighbour's lands on the other, it is not surprising to see castles being created that enabled them to do both. The *yamashiro* on a mountain peak had been shown by Kusunoki Masashige's operations to be a successful model, so we see this put into operation for the purposes both of defence and expansion. As a *daimyō*'s confidence grows, we also see the development of important living areas for commercial expansion that have little defensive capacity in themselves and are dependent upon nearby *yamashiro*. The settlements grow increasingly more complex until the two types of *daimyō* headquarters merge to give the familiar 'Japanese castle' that we know so well.

The Ichijōdani site near the city of Fukui in the former province of Echizen is a unique example of a collection of residences and workshops built beside a *daimyō*'s mansion along a river valley from the late 15th century onwards. It is virtually a fortified town, and utilizes the topography of the narrow valley in which it is built. The town stretches along the banks of the Ichijōdanigawa down to the point where it joins the Asuwagawa. At each end of the town the valley is particularly narrow, and here were two gates, the upper and the lower castle gates. In between them is the town, which is associated with the Asakura family. Asakura Toshikage fought during the Onin War, and on being made governor of Echizen by the *shōgun* he established himself at Ichijōdani, where he died in 1475. His son Norikage (1474–1552) fought constantly against the populist religious armies of the Ikkō-ikki in Echizen. The next generation, Asakura Yoshikage (1533–73), defeated the Ikkō-ikki and forced them to be content with neighbouring Kaga Province. His end came at the hand of Oda Nobunaga, who defeated him at the battle of the Anegawa in 1570 and then besieged him inside Ichijōdani in 1573. Here Asakura Yoshikage killed himself.

ABOVE LEFT This model in the Historical Museum at Ichijōdani shows the location of the Asakura *daimyō*'s *yashiki* (on the left) and the rudimentary castle town on the opposite bank of the Ichijōdanigawa, the river that flows down the valley to join the Asuwagawa. The *yamashiro* that protected the site was located high on the mountain above the *yashiki*.

ABOVE RIGHT This model in the display area of the reconstructed street at Ichijōdani shows how the castle town would have looked about 1520. The size of a samurai's mansion depended upon his rank. Stones placed over the joints weigh down the wooden shingled roofs.



BELOW A small section of the reconstructed street of the castle town of Ichijōdani. The wall are plastered and built over stone foundations. Drainage ditches run along the walls.



The main gate of the Asakura *yashiki* (mansion) at Ichijōdani, located across the river from the castle town. Only a low wall, a rampart and a moat defend it. The main defence was provided by the *yamashiro* on a nearby mountain.

The stone walls, moat and other artefacts of Ichijōdani were discovered along a 200m stretch, and represent a new phase in the development of the samurai class. The largest scale residences are those of samurai. As retainers of the Asakura family, they live adjacent to their lord's mansion. The most important difference between their residences and those of the *yakata* of the Heian and Kamakura Period is that the farming element in their role is much diminished. These men are almost professional soldiers, whose duties anticipate the great changes that would come about when Hideyoshi ordered the separation of samurai and farmers, a new legal status to be rigidly enforced by the Tokugawa.

These social changes are reflected in the site itself, because Ichijōdani is a prototype castle town, and the samurai residences bear a great resemblance to the settlements that were to be such a characteristic of the Edo Period. Each residence is like a smaller and poorer version of their lord's own mansion. The walls are of beaten earth, with simple roofed gateways opening on to the street and tiles for weatherproofing. Their defensive features are very modest, and there are not even right-angled turns through the gateways. Instead the model is that of a community designed for peacetime use, which could be temporarily abandoned for the *yamashiro* on the mountain nearby when danger threatened.

The same considerations applied to the *daimyō*'s own mansion. It has a more elaborate gateway and a moated embankment, but Yoshikage's last stand was made from the mountaintop *yamashiro* rather than this poorly fortified mansion that looks more suited to the streets of Kyōto than to a river valley out in the country. The *yamashirō* site has also been excavated, and is revealed to be a long set of four linked baileys of about 600m from end to end. It is only reached by a stiff climb up narrow mountain paths, making it the perfect observation station and 'last stand' outpost, but totally unsuited

C THE *YASHIKI* (MANSION) AND CASTLE TOWN OF THE ASAKURA AT ICHIJŌDANI: 1520

The settlement of Ichijōdani that grew up around the *yashiki* (mansion) of the Asakura family within a narrow river valley provides an excellent example of an early castle town. There is busy commercial life in the streets of the town where the residences of the Asakura samurai are located. Just like their lord's mansion, these buildings are lightly fortified, and depend upon the strength of the mountaintop *yamashiro* nearby. The sources for this plate are the excavations and reconstructions at Ichijōdani.

C

The *yashiki* (mansion) and castle town of the Asakura at Ichijōdani: 1520







LEFT
A cross section through the wall surrounding a samurai residence at Yuzuki Castle in Matsuyama. The different layers that have been added and rammed down can be clearly seen, as can the outer layer of rough plaster.

RIGHT
One of the low-ranking samurai houses at Yuzuki that lay between the inner castle and the moat.

for daily living. Defensive features include several *unejō tatebori*, a series of parallel trenches running up the sides of the excavated mountain. These provided man-made gullies down which stones could be rolled, but more importantly forced an attacking army to advance in column up their inner slopes, thus exposing them to concentrated fire from the defenders.

Three years after Yoshikage's death the great castle of Azuchi was to be built, the first of a new style of castle that would combine the residential and the defensive elements in one huge complex on plain and mountain as anticipated by Ichijōdani.

Yuzuki and the *yamashiro*

Yuzuki Castle, in the Dogo Hot Spring area of Matsuyama in former Iyo Province on the island of Shikoku, is a small site that provides an excellent example of a medieval *yamashiro*, yet is of a design very different from the Ichijōdani complex. Yuzuki is associated with the Kōno family. Its outer moat was built by Kōno Michinao, the father-in-law of Kurushima (Murakami) Michiyasu, from the famous pirate family of Iyo Province. Yuzuki resembles the small castles of the pirate families of the Inland Sea that were usually built on islands, and like them succumbed to the invasion of Shikoku by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1585.

Yuzuki was the cultural and military heart of the Kōno domains for 250 years. It probably began life during the early 14th century as a modestly sized *yamashiro* on the hill that is at the centre of the site. The defences were expanded over the next two centuries, but this was done within the constraints imposed by the site. The castle hill was isolated from other high ground, so expansion was made by building on the flat lands around and enclosing the castle within a double wet moat and a double earthwork, producing a *hirayamashiro* (castle on plain and hill). The samurai retainers of the Kōno family lived in the space between the two moats. The dwellings of the highest-ranking retainers have been identified on the east of this area, while the lower-ranking samurai lived to the west. Their houses were simple wooden constructions with thatched roofs and were surrounded by beaten earth walls on stone foundations, plastered and topped with tiles that were similar to those at Ichijōdani.

The most dramatic contrast to Yuzuki is provided by the mighty Matsuyama Castle, which was built a few miles away after Yuzuki had been abandoned. For this castle, one of the classic early modern stone-based castles of Japan and the low-lying site of Yuzuki was spurned in favour of a high mountain ridge.

The developed *yamashiro* form and the satellite castle system

As the archetypal castle builders of the Sengoku Period, the Hōjō family thought in terms of a defensive system, not merely individual castles. This was expressed as one *honjō* (main castle) supported by several *shijō* (satellite castles) that were manned by family members or highly trusted retainers. Most of the Hōjō warriors were known by the company to which they were attached, each of which bore the name of the satellite castle. Most of the *shijō* were modest affairs and were not designed to withstand a siege. Instead they were communications points or muster stations with guardrooms and armouries.

Odawara, the Hōjō capital, was the original *honjō*, and the system was copied once the Hōjō had extended their conquests to neighbouring provinces, so that each set of networks became a microcosm of the Hōjō domain as a whole. At the zenith of their power the provinces of the Kantō were dotted with Hōjō fortresses large and small. The *shijō* might consist of little more than a signalling station, but what mattered was how the various fortresses related to each other. To aid communications between their castles the Hōjō introduced a post station system in 1524 linking Odawara in Sagami Province with their fortresses in Musashi Province. Soon after the system was expanded to cover most of the domain, with one castle in each province becoming the provincial *honjō*.

Odawara may well have been one of the most impressive castles of the 16th century in all Japan, ranking with Osaka and Azuchi. Although it did not reach the sophistication of the castle towns of the Edo Period, it was built on an extensive site near to the sea, dominating the narrow neck of land between the Hakone Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. Primarily a fortress, Odawara withstood two sieges, by Uesugi Kenshin in 1561 and Takeda Shingen in 1569, and only capitulated to Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1590 after a 100-day blockade. The first fortress on the site was built by the Omori family in 1416, and succumbed to Hōjō Sōun, the first of the five Hōjō

The reconstructed Hōjō Castle of Sakasai provides one of the finest views of military architecture in all Japan. The long wood and clay wall runs along an embankment above a wet moat.



A corner of the Sakasai Castle site, showing a watchtower and an elegant domestic building within the courtyard.



daimyō in 1495. Sōun kept his capital at Nirayama, which was abandoned in favour of Odawara by his son Hōjō Ujitsuna on Sōun's death.

We are fortunate that several of the Hōjō castles' sites have been excavated and preserved. In some cases there have been reconstructions of parts of the sites. At Hachigata, for example, a wooden fortified gatehouse has been constructed within the museum. It is very similar to the classic Kamakura Period models described above. A small gateway and walls have been restored outside. One of the most interesting defensive features of all has been carefully preserved at Yamanaka Castle. This is the curious 'checkerboard moat', so-called from its resemblance to the playing board for the Japanese game of *shogi*. The moats are criss-crossed by raised sections to hinder an attacker's progress. If they were flooded the upper surfaces would be invisible, and an enemy soldier would have to haul himself up to proceed, thus exposing himself as a target. Overall, Yamanaka Castle is an extensive *yamashiro* covering the mountain road from the Hakone barrier down to the sea on the western side of the Izu Peninsula. From the top of its Nishi-no-maru (western bailey) there is a magnificent view of Mount Fuji.

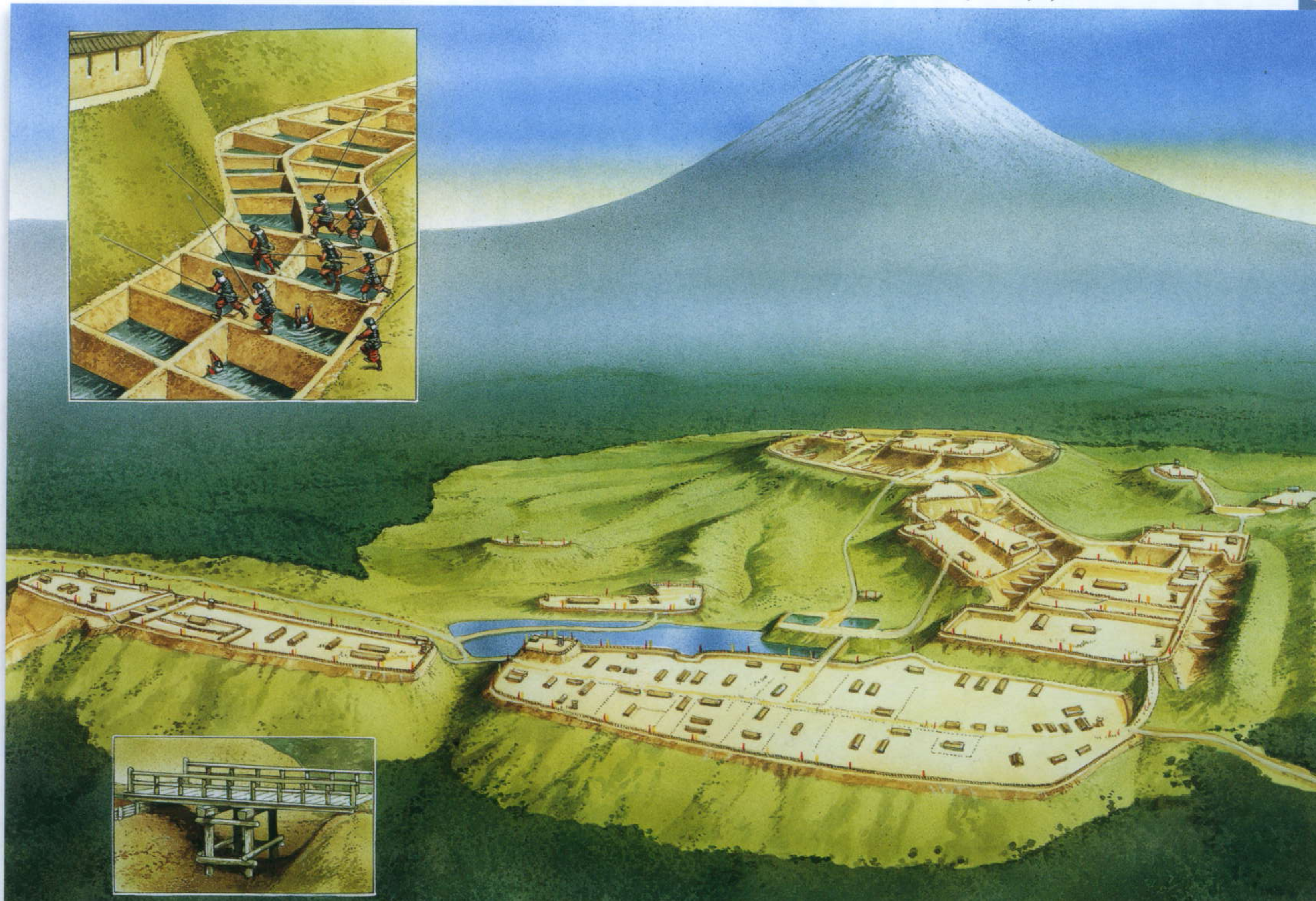
Two buildings that form part of the outer wall at Sakasai Castle are shown here. The larger of the two is three-storeyed and guards the modest gateway next to it. The smaller is a simple guardhouse within the length of the wall.

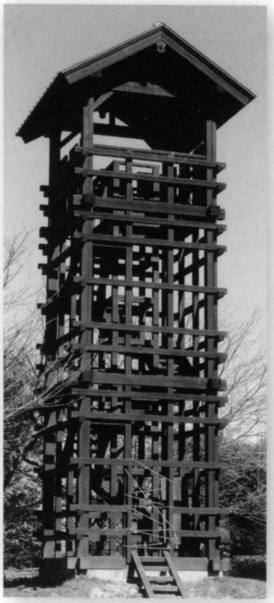


D THE HŌJŌ FAMILY'S *YAMASHIRO* OF YAMANAKA: 1540

The Hōjō family used a system of castles to defend their territory and to consolidate new gains. The *yamashiro* of Yamanaka is a prime example of the process because it guarded the western approaches to the strategic Hakone Mountains beneath the massive bulk of Mount Fuji. As a classic *yamashiro* Yamanaka illustrates many features of the style, and is particularly noted for its *shogi* ditches, whereby they were divided into small sections like a checkerboard. The source for this plate is the site of Yamanaka itself, to which typical castle buildings of the period have been added.

D The Hōjō family's *yamashiro* of Yamanaka: 1540





This is the tallest of the three reconstructed watchtowers at Sakasai Castle.

Sakasai, located to the north of Tokyo, is the finest of all the reconstructed Hōjō castles. Sakasai is built on a low hill, and thus has the predominant characteristics of a *hirajiro* (castle on a plain). It was defended by a wet moat, much of which survives, and the local council have restored the section of wall immediately above this moat, together with an openwork tower, a bridge and a couple of buildings, so that when a visitor arrives it looks as though the entire castle is still there. The walls, which run along the grassy bank above the moat, are made from wattle and daub and wooden planks. They are weatherproofed using shingles and have rectangular loopholes. A fine three-storey tower building stands next to the roofed gateway. The ground floor is fully enclosed with narrow windows and sloping roofs. The top storey has a walkway around it beneath a similar sloping roof. There are two lookout towers on the site. Each is built from long wooden beams and has a roof to protect against the rain. There is an interesting gate tower on the other side of the site that controls a bridge over the moat.

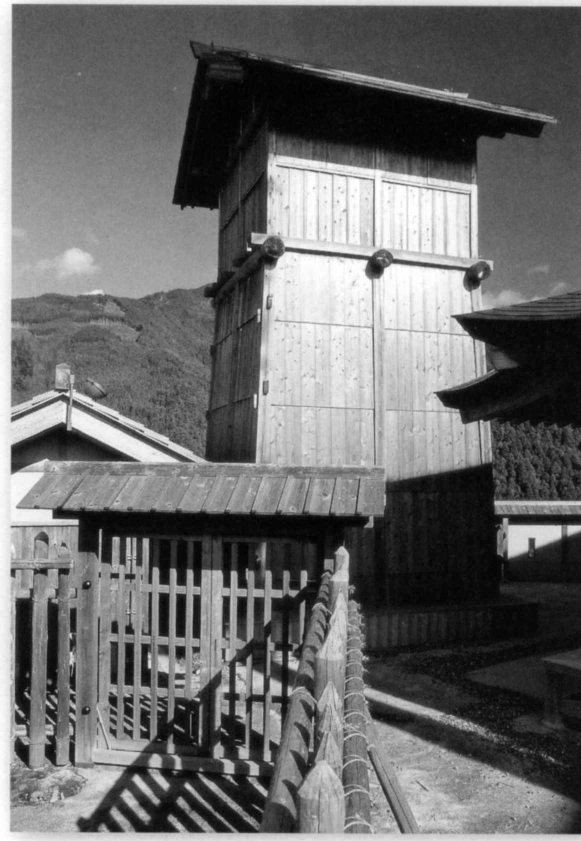
The Takeda family used a similar satellite system to the Hōjō. Being protected by high mountains through which access could be gained along river valleys or over high passes, the great Takeda Shingen felt confident enough that he never built a castle as such. The people of Kai Province were his shield, so his headquarters of Tsutsujigasaki was just a rectangular mansion fortified only by a moat and a wall, with apparently no supplementary *yamashiro* defences anywhere near. It is now the site of the Takeda Shrine in Kofu. Indeed, Shingen's heir Katsuyori's decision to build a 'proper' castle was regarded as a very bad omen by the surviving Takeda retainers.

'Proper' castles, of course, were needed on the fringes of the Takeda domains where they came into contact with the territories of the Hōjō and the Uesugi. Just as in the Hōjō model, there was a network of satellite castles and signalling stations, the latter consisting of smoke-signal posts. One Takeda satellite castle to have been excavated is Takane, built overlooking a river valley near the modern town of Misakubo on one of the strategic approaches to the Takeda lands from the Pacific coast. Takane is located on Sankakuyama, a 420m-high mountain with a 150m vertical drop on one side. It was first settled by the Okuyama family early in the 15th century, and fell to the Takeda as they expanded outwards from Kai. It appears to have been in use until about 1576. Takane has the usual structure of three baileys carved out of the hillside,



The view from Takane Castle, looking down into the river valley that it was built to protect.

although, in accordance with the period of development, it does not appear to have been reinforced with stone. Nor does stone play any part in the design of the buildings on site, which are instead all of wood and are defended by wooden palisades and modest plastered wattle and daub walls. The central building on the site, and one which has now been reconstructed, is a fine lookout tower (*seirō yagura*). Unlike the openwork towers rebuilt at Sakasai, this one is covered on all sides with wooden planking.



Urban defence in Kyōto

Even though it is outside the time-span of this book I conclude this section with a mention of the wall built round Kyōto in 1591. The Odoi (great rampart) was an earthen wall about 3m high and 9m wide which extended 22.5km round the outside of the city. The wall was partly moated and bamboo was planted along the top. It was completed within five months, but could not compare defensively to the mighty stone walls that already surrounded many Japanese castles, and seems to have been built largely to control individual malefactors. A diarist wrote that if a suspicious character appeared a bell was rung and the wall's ten gates were rapidly closed so that no one could go in or out without a pass. Yet no army would have been deterred by the Odoi, which resembled the failed attempt to enclose the capital several centuries earlier. Indeed its resemblance to a Chinese city wall may well have been a major factor in Hideyoshi's decision to build it. He was planning to conquer China and may have wished to create a monument to impress ambassadors from the Ming court.



ABOVE, TOP
Unlike the openwork towers of Sakasai, the main tower of Takane Castle is completely enclosed.

ABOVE, BOTTOM
Details of the outer wall of the inner bailey of Takane Castle, a classic *yamashiro* owned by the Takeda family.

THE LIVING SITES

Castles and conscripts

The men who garrisoned the castles of Kyūshū in anticipation of a Korean invasion were all conscripts, an idea copied from China. A *heishi* (soldier) was assigned to a particular *gundan* (regiment), and served for part of the year, the rest of the time being spent on agricultural duties. Every soldier carried a bow and quiver and had a pair of swords. Much use was made of heavy wooden shields as battlefield protection.

In AD 684 Emperor Temmu issued a decree ordering all civil and military officials in his Court to become skilled in the martial arts, because 'in government, military matters are the essential thing'. These men would be the core of his army and could control any recalcitrant regional official who was not acting loyally. To further ensure this overwhelming central control



This beautiful reconstruction in the Fujiwara Heritage Park at Esashi shows Fujiwara Hidehira (centre) entertaining his son Yasuhira (to the viewer's left) and their fugitive guest Minamoto Yoshitsune to dinner inside the main hall of the *shinden-zukuri* within the fortified palace of Yanagi no Gosho in about 1186.

Temmu began the confiscation of weapons from anyone not employed in his government. These were issued to the conscript infantrymen who were drafted to the area around the imperial capital of Nara or to the fortresses of Kyūshū. Temmu's successors continued his work, culminating in AD 702 with the Taiho system, which finally succeeded in creating a large and reliable Japanese army conscripted on the Chinese model.

These decisions by a series of emperors resulted in hundreds of men being uprooted from their homes and moved to distant fortresses where very little happened. Such service was therefore a lonely and boring occupation. Mononobe Akimochi, a border guard sent from eastern Honshū to Kyūshū in AD 755, composed the following poem about his unenviable situation:

The dread imperial command
I have received; from tomorrow
I will sleep with the grass
No wife being with me.

The system of conscripting peasants was finally ended in AD 792. The official reason given was that the decision had been made to reduce the burden on farming communities of impressed labour. There was much truth in this, for it had long been recognized that if a household breadwinner was drafted, the whole family would suffer. There was even a saying that if a man was conscripted for *heishi* duties then he was unlikely to return until his hair had turned white! But with the pacification of the *emishi* and improved relations with Korea, Japan's borders were more secure than they had been for centuries. In AD 835 even the guards mounted on the strategic islands of Iki and Tsushima were withdrawn, and the sad poems written home by soldiers became a thing of the past.

Compared to the Kyūshū fortresses life in the northern stockades was much livelier because *emishi* raids kept the garrisons on their toes. Otherwise the

soldiers would grow their own food, and archaeological finds within the northern stockades have confirmed their dual role as military bases and defensive locations for people who were both soldiers and farmers. At Fort Akita, digs in pit dwellings have revealed not only iron knives and arrowheads but also axes and reapers, which would be expected from a frontier 'colony'. Other information about daily life in the castles comes from the numerous finds of *mokkan,* the wooden writing slips that were used much more frequently than paper at that time. Inscriptions on them, which are often dated, refer to troop numbers and movements and all the minutiae of the bureaucracy associated with being a frontier provincial capital. Some paper that was lacquered to make it weather resistant has also survived.

Early arms and armour

We know quite a lot about the armour worn by the garrisons of the early castles of Kyūshū and the North because of examples excavated from Japanese burial mounds. The earliest type was called *tanko*, and was made of heavy iron, the plates being fastened together with leather thongs. Almost all the surviving examples fitted closely to the body and had a pronounced waist so that they sat firmly on the hips. They were provided with an opening down the front that was fastened by ties of cloth. The deep cut-outs for the arms left an extension at the front reaching to the upper chest, and a similar, rather higher section at the back, to which were fastened a pair of cloth shoulder straps which transferred some of the not inconsiderable weight from the hips to the shoulders.

Protecting the lower body and tying over the flanged lower edge of the body armour was a flared skirt, called the *kusazuri* (grass rubber), because it reached to just above the knee. Like the neck guard, it was made of 10 or more horizontal pieces, laced to internal leather thongs and split down either side to allow some movement when walking. No protection was provided for the lower legs at this date, but long baggy trousers were worn, tied with a drawstring just below the knee.

The shoulders and upper arms were covered by an arrangement of curved plates, running from front to back and extending as far as the elbow. Completing the outfit were long, tubular, tapering cuffs of plate fitted with a small panel of leather-laced scales which formed a defensive cover for the back of the hand. As was normal on all later styles of armour, the metal surface was given a coating of natural lacquer as a protection against the humidity of the Japanese climate. Some slight decoration was afforded by leather thongs sewn through holes along the sharp edges of all the major elements, and by a bunch of pheasant-tail feathers tied to iron prongs provided for that purpose on top of the helmet, which had a pronounced beaked front. A typical armament for a *tanko*-wearing soldier was a large wooden shield, a spear and a straight-bladed sword. Other soldiers were trained as archers or crossbowmen.

Although the *tanko* continued to be made, a new style of armour was developed called *keiko*. These armours were made by combining numerous small scales of metal



The boudoir of Fujiwara Hidehira's wife within the palace of Yanagi no Gosho, according to the reconstruction at Esashi.



A glimpse of daily life within a high-ranking samurai's home in the castle town of Ichijōdani. One servant is filleting a fish for *sashimi* (raw fish), while another prepares the trays of food that will be taken in for the samurai.

or leather rather than large plates. The result was a flexible defence whose efficiency lay in its ability to absorb the energy of a blow in the lacing sandwiched between the rows of scales before penetration could begin. The body of a *keiko* resembled a sleeveless coat opening down the front and provided with a flared skirt extending to mid-thigh. With the *keiko* came a new style of helmet with a very prominent pierced horizontal peak riveted to the front lower edge. The neck guard fitted to these helmets was made of metal strips arranged exactly like the earlier ones.

Crossbows and catapults

Until the end of the 12th century both the Korean-style castles of Kyūshū and the northern stockades were defended by a mysterious weapon called the *ōyumi*. The name was written using the same ideograph (*nu*) used in China for 'crossbow'. Although there is some controversy about whether *ōyumi* means hand-held crossbows, because the Japanese expression literally means 'great bow', it is generally accepted that they were large-scale siege crossbows operated by a team of men. Unfortunately none has ever been excavated, but written records lamenting the lack of skilled operators strongly suggest that these were large and complex machines, not just simple infantry weapons.

The first mention of an *ōyumi* occurs in an entry in the *Nihon Shoki* for AD 618 referring to the defeat of a Sui invasion by Goguryeo forces. The ruler of Goguryeo sent two Chinese captives to Japan along with a small number of crossbows and a camel. By the time of the next mention in the *Nihon Shoki* in AD 672 their use appears to be well established. On this occasion they were 'discharged confusedly, and the arrows fell like rain'. For the next two centuries we read of *ōyumi* being deployed, usually as the result of the latest scare about an invasion by the Silla Kingdom of Korea from the AD 860s onwards, although the threat never seemed to be sufficiently strong to restart the fortress-building programme that had been wound down from about AD 700. Instead *ōyumi* were set up at possible landing sites such as the island of Tsushima and the province of Hōki, where a crossbow expert was funded in AD 871. Crossbows were used at sea in a battle with Silla ships in AD 894, but it is not clear whether these were handheld weapons or *ōyumi*.

The larger variety was certainly present in the northern stockades, as shown by the records of an attack in AD 880, probably by bandits rather than *emishi*, which was directed against Akita Castle. The insurgents burned the fortress and destroyed the crossbows that they found inside. The chronicler of the event usefully makes a clear distinction between the 100 hand-held crossbows and the 29 *ōyumi* that were seized. It is also in the north of Japan that we note the final recorded use of an *oyūmi* in Japanese warfare. This happened at the Atsukashi earthwork during Yoritomo's advance against the Oshū Fujiwara in 1189. The chronicle *Azuma Kagami* tells us that during an attack on one of the strongpoints along the line Yoritomo's men took 18 heads in spite of deadly arrows from an *ōyumi*. Yet from this moment on *ōyumi* vanish from the Japanese scene, and their swansong at Atsukashi, a unique occurrence not found in any other campaign of the Gempei War, may indicate that in their northern fastness the Oshū Fujiwara had simply failed to move with the times.

As no example of an *ōyumi* has survived we can only speculate as to their actual design. Did they use one bow, or were they like the powerful siege crossbows of ancient China that combined two or even three bows pulling together? Did they fire one massive arrow or a volley? Did they have wheels or were they always permanently mounted? An entry from AD 835 mentions a new type that was supposed to be able to be rotated in all directions. They were certainly complicated and specialized machines, because several records from the 9th century AD complain that the *ōyumi* in their arsenals were going to waste because no one knew how to use them.

As well as discharging arrows the *ōyumi* were used for projecting stones. There are records of such use for the Former Nine Years' War and the Later Three Years' War. When used for this purpose the *ōyumi* are sometimes referred to as *ishiyumi* (stone bows). One warrior fighting in the Later Three Years' War was hit on the helmet by a stone from an *ishiyumi* and knocked to the ground. In 1156 a certain Kiheiji Taifu is praised for his ability to throw stones over a distance of three *chō* (about 300m).

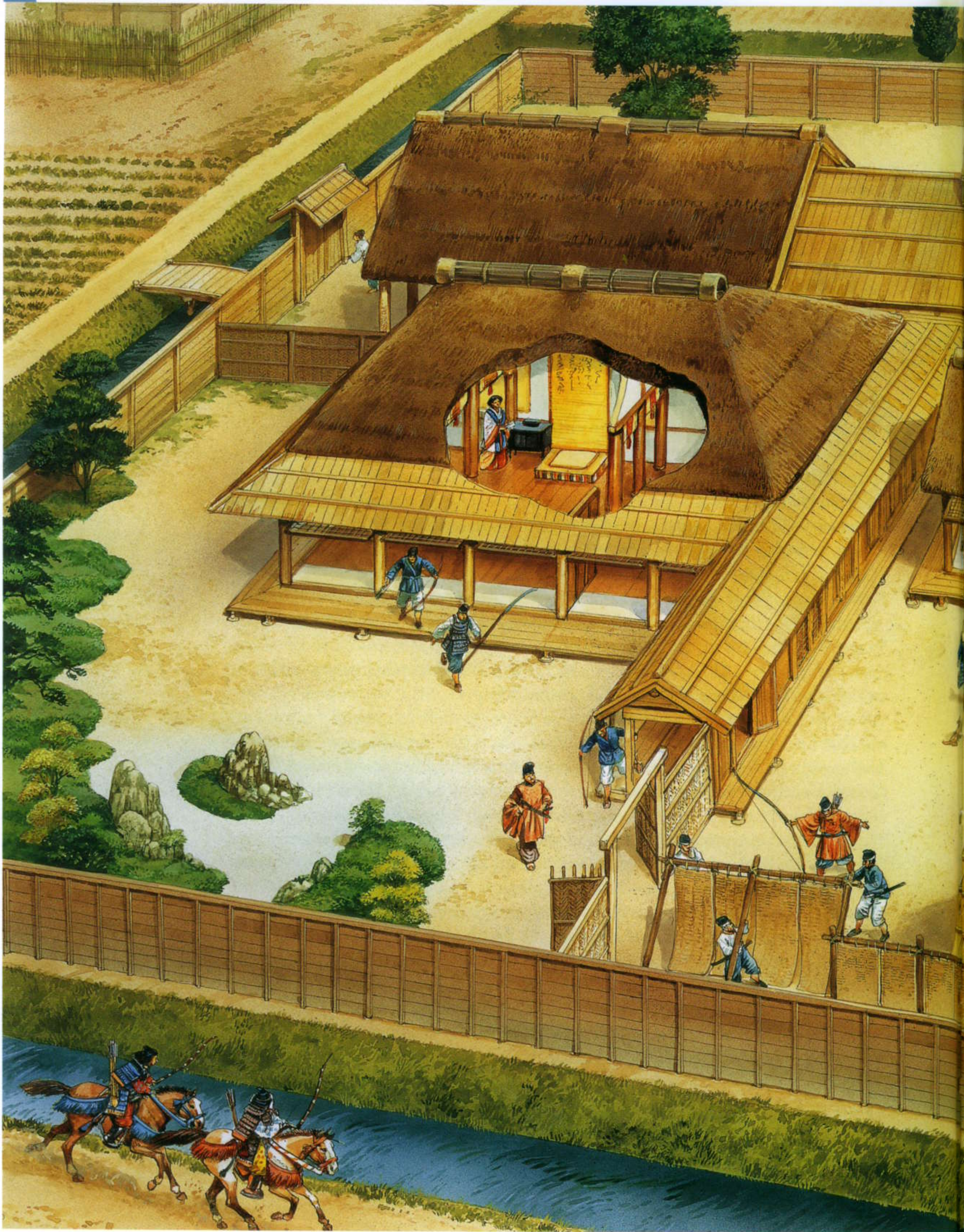
Health and hygiene

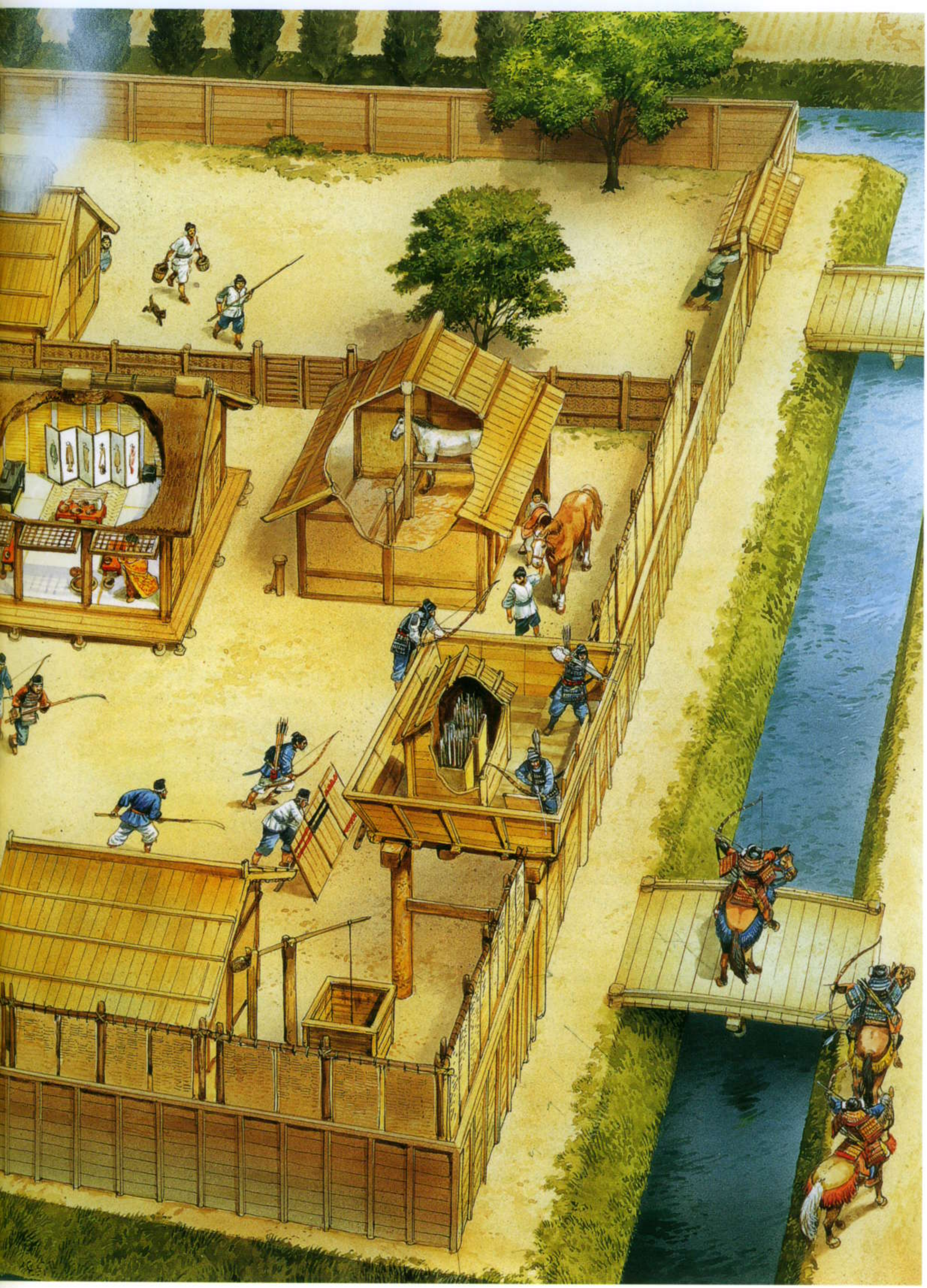
The supply of fresh water was very important in any fortified site. A Nara Period well has been found at Akita Castle that extends 5m underground, while a Heian Period well on the same site still has water flowing into it today. The food that people ate in the Nara and Heian Periods and the ingredients that they used are described in detail in literature. All that is missing are recipes, so we cannot be quite sure how meals were put together. Nobles had the luxury of consuming dairy products as well as such speciality items as abalone, while the diet of commoners was much simpler. Historical records seem to indicate that people consumed two meals a day, but this was not considered sufficient for those engaged in heavy manual work or fighting. We know this from surviving *mokkan* on which requests were written for more meals and in-between meal snacks. Earthen vessels used for storing such snacks have been found at Akita Castle.

E **NEXT PAGE: A HIGH-RANKING SAMURAI'S FORTIFIED *YAKATA* (MANSION): 1200**

This plate recreates the domestic life of a high-ranking retainer of one of the powerful clans of the Heian and Kamakura periods. Although the walls are quite modest in defensive terms they have an outer moat and a very strong fortified gateway that is typical of the times. Inside the compound the owner enjoys a comfortable living area in the *shinden* style that includes a Japanese garden. The sources for the plate are the painted scroll *Ippen hijiri e* and the reconstructions at the Fujiwara Heritage Park at Esashi.

E A high-ranking samurai's fortified *yakata* (mansion): 1200





Two samurai in the service of the Asakura family enjoy a little diversion in the form of a game of *shogi* inside a samurai residence in Ichijōdani.



Important beliefs in ritual purity related to the religious ideals of Shintō, as much as notions of hygiene, probably lay behind the strong emphasis on sanitation that we find associated with early Japanese castles. Dung beetles have been found in the moats of Yayoi Period sites, suggesting that the ditches were not just military structures but also latrines, and may also have been designed to allow heavy rainfall to wash away excrement. Fresh water was obtained from wells within the site.

Apart from this separation between fresh water and polluted water there is no evidence of the provision of toilets as such, but all this changes with the establishment of the fortresses of the 7th century AD. Sophisticated archaeological work on early military sites has yielded fascinating information about sanitation and has even allowed conclusions to be drawn about the diet of the people who lived in the northern stockades and the provincial headquarters. For example, cesspit toilets have been found at the site of Yanagi no Gosho, the fortified palace of the Oshū Fujiwara in Hiraizumi. Cesspit toilets allowed human waste to be recycled as fertilizer for the fields. Literary evidence is available for this practice from the Kamakura Period onwards, and the Portuguese Jesuit Luis Frois described it happening during the 16th century. Analysis of specimens found in the toilets showed the prevalence of a large number of eggs of a fish tapeworm, an infection caused by eating raw or incompletely cooked salmon from the nearby river. Other finds of eggs of tapeworms associated with pigs and cattle contradicts the popular notion that meat eating ceased with the introduction of Buddhism.

At some early sites wooden structures to convey water have been found, and for many years it was assumed that these were for ritual purposes. However, analysis of parasitical remains around them has shown most convincingly that these are in fact flushing toilets, and that the ritual objects such as beads found there were probably lost when the owner was otherwise engaged! One version (at the Makimuku site, a non-military site of the Kofun Period) involved a reservoir to store water, including a filter for leaves and other debris. The collection tank into which the water flowed via a wooden conduit would have had manual flushing devices such as ladles and pails. Here also are stones upon which users could squat. Water overflow passed over a lip and joined the

water washed manually downstream. A large number of lung-fluke eggs were found at this site, suggesting the eating of river crabs. Exactly this type of flushing toilet has been excavated at Akita Castle, showing that sanitary facilities existed even on the fringes of Yamato civilization. There is no ambiguity over the identification of the site as a toilet because of the presence of several *chugi*, the small wooden slips that were used instead of toilet paper.



A victory banquet inside the *yashiki* (mansion) of a triumphant *daimyō* (from *Ehon Taikōki*).

Flushing toilets have also been identified at the sites of the city of Fujiwara, which preceded Nara as Japan's first permanent capital, and at Nara itself, where long narrow buildings were provided as public conveniences. The job of keeping the sewage gutters clean fell to prisoners, as directed by the contemporary Penal Code:

> The person sentenced to penal servitude shall be directed to carry out construction work on roads and bridges and other miscellaneous work. Furthermore, the government office shall direct prisoners to sweep out the outside of the Palace every six days, and clear up sewage in the Palace, and the gutters of toilets on the day after a rainy day.

Similar concern about hygiene in castles was still to be found in the mid-16th century. The Hōjō specified that for their castles: 'Human waste and horse manure must be taken out of the castle every day and deposited at least one arrow's flight from the castle.'

This implies cesspit toilets rather than a flushing system, but sanitary concerns were made very clear, because health and safety considerations necessitated a twice-daily inspection regime by the castle commander, as recorded in Hōjō Sōun's 'Twenty-One Articles':

> Before washing your hands in the morning, inspect the latrine, stable, garden and outside the gate. …
> When you return in to your residence in the evening, time permitting, inspect the back of the residence and stable, repair the four walls and fences of the compound, and make sure that even holes only a dog can get through are closed up and repaired. …

That health depended on more than ritual purity is shown by the presence in Akita castle of buried *enatsubo*, earthenware vessels whose name literally means 'placenta jars'. As an offering for the health and success of a newborn baby, parents would put money, writing brushes, knives and other assorted objects into an *enatsubo* jar and bury it. One placenta jar excavated at Akita castle contained five coins, a few articles of clothing and other metal objects. A similar religious belief lay behind the discovery in a well of two *bokusho*, papers on which prayers were written. One was a petition for plentiful water, the other a prayer for the banishment of evil spirits.

A section from the painted scroll of the Later Three Years' War. This is a copy of the original in the museum at the site of Kanezawa Castle in the village of Gosannen. A wounded samurai falls from the parapet of the wooden defences, which are covered with arrows. In the epic *Mutsuwaki* such a cloak of arrows provided kindling for a successful attempt at burning the castle down. Note the suspended rock.



THE SITES AT WAR

Sieges of early castles

As there are no written records from the Yayoi Period, any operational activity around the Yayoi stockades has to be inferred from the archaeological finds. The anti-invasion castles of Kyūshū, of course, never saw any action, and although the northern stockades were subjected to raiding by the *emishi* there is again a lack of any detailed written account of such operations. One account simply tells us: 'They swarm like bees and gather like ants. ... But when we attack, they flee into the mountains and forests. When we let them go, they assault our fortifications. ... Each of their leaders is as good as 1,000 men.'

It is not until the Heian Period that we come across reliable contemporary accounts of operations involving fortifications, and here the source material is very rich. For good accounts of fighting around Heian Period stockades we need look no further than *Mutsuwaki* (*Tale of Mutsu*), the near-contemporary account of the Former Nine Years' War. The first battle involving a stockade occurs at Komatsu:

> Since the date was inauspicious and twilight had already fallen, Yoriyoshi had not intended to attack at once, but while Takesada and Yorisada were conducting a preliminary reconnaissance, their footsoldiers set fire to some buildings and reeds outside the stockade. The men inside responded with vengeful yells and barrages of rocks. Accepting the challenge, Yoriyoshi's men competed enthusiastically to be the first to scale the ramparts.

F THE MOATED YAYOI SETTLEMENT OF YOSHINOGARI UNDER ATTACK: AD 250

The Yayoi Period site of Yoshinogari has been thoroughly excavated and has revealed several defensive features. In this plate we see a hypothetical attack by a rival tribe on the Minami Naiku, the inner 'palace' to the south of the complex. The outer ditch has been thoroughly breached, and there is fierce fighting across the inner moat and palisade. The watchtower is playing an important role in the defence. The sources for the plate are the excavations and reconstructions at Yoshinogari.

F The moated Yayoi settlement of Yoshinogari under attack: AD 250



At first both groups of attackers were held back by the deep blue waters that flowed beside the stockade on the east and the south, and by the mossy cliffs towering sheer above it on the north and the west. Presently, however, a band of 20 gallant men, led by two warriors named Fukae Korenori and Otomo Kazusue, began to chisel into the banks with their swords. They hauled themselves over the rocks with their spears, tunnelled underneath the stockade, and burst into the fortress with their weapons bared, to the utter confusion of the defenders.

The fight ended with the victorious army setting fire to the stockade. In the next siege section, which deals with the attack on Kuriyagawa, we first encounter the *ōyumi*, but the account is more notable for its stark savagery. The action is a far cry from the popular idea of a samurai battle, where elite fighters maintained the gentlemanly notion of giving challenges to honourable opponents. Instead the killing is completely anonymous, and when the attack is frustrated the besiegers resort to the indiscriminate weapon of fire: 'When the enemy were far away, the defenders shot them to death with their *ōyumi*; when they were close, they struck them down with rocks. If by any chance someone reached the base of the fortress they cut him down with swords after scalding him with boiling water.'

> The men in the towers beckoned to Yoriyoshi's men, calling 'Are you warriors', and several dozen servant girls climbed up to the towers to sing songs. Yoriyoshi was much displeased.
>
> The battle began at the hour of the hare on the 16th day. All day and night the *ōyumi* twanged and arrows and rocks flew like rain. Yoriyoshi's Army sacrificed hundreds of men in a futile attempt to bring down the stoutly defended stockade. Finally, during the hour of the sheep on the 17th day, the general directed his warriors to fill the trenches by demolishing houses in the village, and to pile cut reeds along the riverbanks.

The section continues to tell us how Yoriyoshi then prays to his family patron, Hachiman the god of war, to send a strong wind that will fan the flames he is about to ignite. He himself grasps the first torch, assuring his men that it is the will of the gods, and then tosses it on to the pyre. At the same instant a dove flew up from the neighbouring woods. As the dove was believed to be the messenger of Hachiman this is regarded as a very good omen. The god is placing his seal of approval on to the means whereby the battle will be ended.

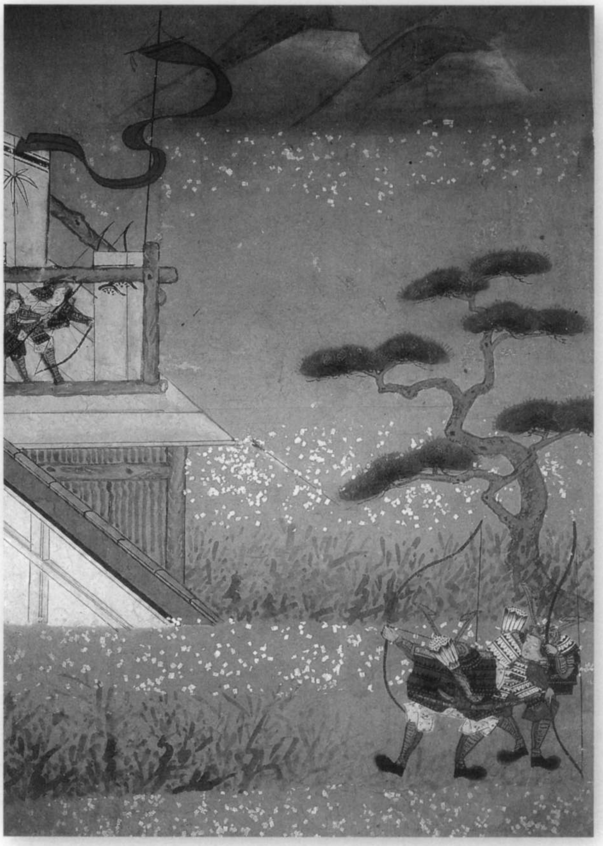


In this section of the Later Three Years' War scroll we see the conclusion of a siege by the burning down of the wooden buildings. Flames are pouring out of the loopholes in the plastered walls, which are resistant to fire. Samurai lie dead on the approaches to the castle.

The little point of detail in the quotation that follows about the arrows stuck into the outside of the stockade acting as kindling gives the episode an air of great authenticity:

> A strong wind suddenly sprang up and sent smoke and flames spreading towards the feathers of the arrows previously released by Yoriyoshi's men, which blanketed the outer sides of the stockade and its towers like straws in a raincoat. As the towers and buildings caught fire, a great lament rose from the thousands of men and women inside. Some of its frantic rebels flung themselves into the watery depths; others lost their heads to naked blades.

Yoriyoshi's warriors crossed the river and attacked. In desperation several hundred rebels put on armour, brandished their swords, and tried to break through the cordon. Since they were resigned to death, they made no effort to protect themselves, and they had exacted a frightful toll from Yoriyoshi's warriors before Takenori finally commanded, 'let them through'. Once the encirclement was opened, they fled without a struggle. The besiegers then attacked their flanks and killed them all.



An archery duel between besiegers and a tower of the Heian Period. Note the *mon* (family crest) on the wooden shields that provide extra defence. (Watanabe Museum, Tottori)

> Inside the stockade dozens of beautiful women coughed in the smoke and sobbed miserably, all dressed in damask, gauze and green stuff shot with gold. Every last one of them was dragged out and given to the warriors, who raped them.

That was how sieges were conducted against the stockades of the Heian Period, with fire, cruelty and utter ruthlessness.

The sieges of the 14th century

The accounts in *Taiheiki* of the sieges of Akasaka and Chihaya during the Wars Between the Courts are very different in content from the harsh realism of the *Mutsuwaki*. The accent is very much on the skills and heroics of Kusunoki Masashige as he defends his fortresses using a mixture of bravery and cunning. At Akasaka an extra outer wall fools the attackers:

> ... From within the castle not an arrow was released, nor was any man seen. ... At last the attackers laid hold of the wall on the four sides to climb over it, filled with excitement. But thereupon men within the castle cut the ropes supporting the wall, all at the same time. For it was double wall, built to let the outside fall down. More than a thousand of the attackers became as thought crushed by a weight, so that only their eyes moved as the defenders threw down logs and boulders on to them.

Akasaka eventually had to be abandoned when the besiegers cut off its water supply, so Kusunoki moved to the stronger and more remote castle of Chihaya. Its formidable appearance made the enemy cautious:



The defence of Chihaya Castle is dramatically illustrated by this relief model in the Kusunoki Masashige Memorial Museum at the Minatogawa Shrine in Kobe. The suspended rocks are released by cutting through the ropes, and a barrage of other stones accompanies them as the attackers are plunged down into the valley.

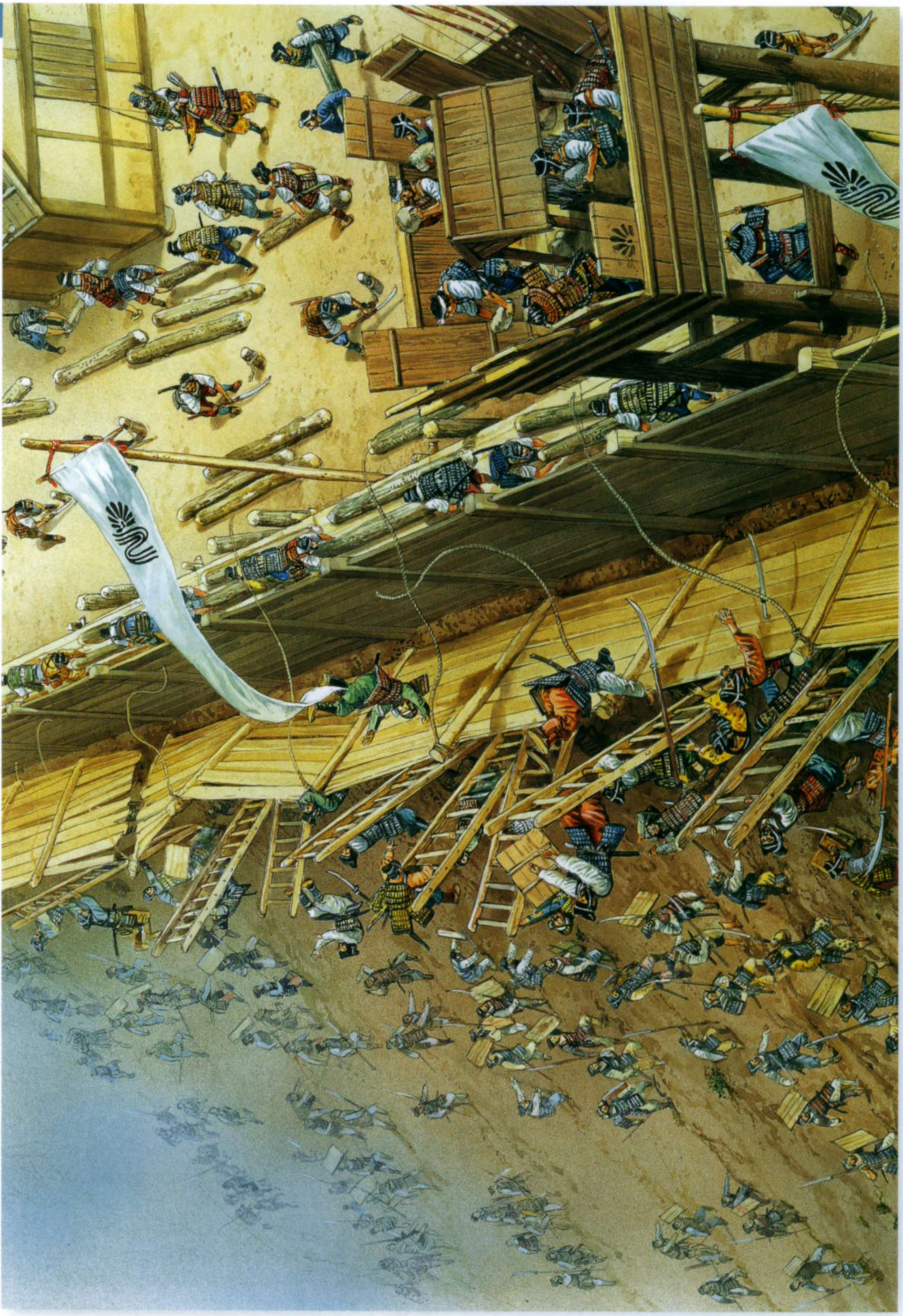
> At first for two or three days they forbore to build positions against it, nor prepared their attack, but with upheld shields climbed together as far as the gate, each striving to be first. Undismayed the warriors within the castle threw down mighty rocks from the tower tops to smash the enemy's shields to pieces; and while the attackers were afflicted thereby, the defenders shot them terribly with arrows.

A stratagem appears shortly:

> But although their hearts were valiant, they could not climb up that high and steep side. They stood vainly glaring at the castle, helpless to do aught but swallow their anger. Just at that time the warriors within the castle let fall ten great trees laid down flat against the ditch in readiness, by which four or five hundred attackers were smitten, who fell over dead like chessmen. And while the remainder clambered discomfited, seeking to escape the falling trees, the castle warriors shot at them according to their will, from towers on all sides.

G THE CASTLE OF AKASAKA UNDER ATTACK: 1333

In this plate we see Kusunoki Masashige, the great imperial loyalist, putting into action one his celebrated stratagems in defence of Emperor Go Daigo. His men erected a dummy outer wall round Akasaka above one of its steepest slopes. As soon as the enemy were climbing up it the wall was allowed to collapse. The sources for this plate are the description of the action in the *Taiheiki* and research undertaken into contemporary castle design.



G

The castle of Akasaka under attack: 1333

We also read of Kusunoki Masashige creating a dummy army of straw, and then releasing rocks by cutting ropes as the enemy drew near, and countering an equally ingenious ploy by the besiegers to create a bridge that could be dropped across one of the chasms. This was done by dropping combustible material on to the bridge and setting it on fire.

The siege of Arai Castle, 1516

The progress made by the Hōjō family from being obscure provincial *daimyō* to controlling the Kantō was carried out almost exclusively by conducting successful sieges against rival castles. The system of control by satellite castles followed on from these successes, with the Hōjō's new possessions being defended against allcomers until the siege of Odawara in 1590. One of the most interesting accounts of a Hōjō acquisition of an enemy castle concerns the long war that Hōjō Sōun waged against the Miura family, which was carried out by a process of isolation and progressive control, and ended with a furious attack. The defeat of the Miura was essential if the Hōjō were to control the whole of Sagami Province and expand to the east, because the Miura controlled Okazaki Castle that overlooked the Tōkaidō road not far from Odawara castle, which had fallen to the Hōjō in 1495. They also had a number of outposts on the peninsula that bore their family name, which juts out into the sea further to the east and includes the former capital of Kamakura on its western shoreline.

The Miura were allied to the Ogigayatsu Uesugi, but their *daimyō* Miura Yoshiatsu's failure to capture any Hōjō possessions and internal strife between the Ogigayatsu and Yamanouchi branches of the Uesugi allowed Hōjō Sōun to take the fight to the Miura, and in 1512 he captured Okazaki. Two months later he attacked Sumiyoshi Castle, which had once been part of the defences of Kamakura. This gave the Hōjō control of the old capital and drove the Miura back to their castle of Arai. The building of Tamanawa Castle to the north of the Miura Peninsula meant that the Miura were now surrounded.

Arai was located almost at the very end of the Miura Peninsula with rocky cliffs on nearly all sides of the castle site, which the Miura had made into an island by cutting a channel through the narrow isthmus than had joined it to the mainland. The only access to this artificial *umijiro* (sea castle) was a large wooden drawbridge that led to an open bailey beyond which lay the main castle. Hōjō Sōun believed that the Miura, now isolated in Arai, would 'wither on the vine' as the *Hōjō Godaiki* puts it, but the Miura were initially supremely confident, because they could be supplied from the sea by their own navy and had on the island what they described as a great cave known as the 'thousand horsemen tower' where large quantities of supplies could be stored. Four years later Sōun's isolation of Arai appeared to have had no effect, so he decided to mount a decisive attack upon them in 1516.

Two thousand soldiers defended Arai, against whom Hōjō Sōun, who was now 84 years old, brought between 4,000 and 5,000 men. Once Sōun had cut Arai off from fresh supplies it did not take long for the 2,000 defenders to consume the rice intended for only 1,000 men. The final Hōjo assault involved a landing on one side of the island and a fight up a path while the main attack went against the channel under the drawbridge. Tons of rock and rubble were poured into the gap until it could be crossed, and then the Hōjō samurai fought their way up beneath the raised drawbridge.

Realizing that all was lost Miura Yoshiatsu and his son Yoshioki prepared to sell their lives dearly. It was a dark night because clouds obscured the moon.

Father and son drank a final cup of *sake* together and led a furious charge out of the castle gate that smashed through the Hōjō lines to a depth of 200m. Young Yoshioki wielded an enormous iron-studded wooden club, until, entirely surrounded by enemies and unable to defend himself further, he performed the most dramatic act of suicide in Japanese history. If the story is to be believed, it was done by cutting off his own head. This greatly impressed the victorious Hōjō, who took the head back to Odawara and interred it under a pine tree.

JAPANESE CASTLE SITES TODAY

The sites of the fortified places described in this book are by no means as well known nor as accessible as the famous later Japanese castles such as Himeji and Hikone. Nevertheless, a combination of preservation and restoration, which in nearly all cases is done sensitively and well, makes a visit to the early sites a very rewarding experience. For the Yayoi Period the visitor has the choice between Otsuka, now in the city of Yokohama, which shares its site with an excellent museum, and the amazing Yoshinogari at the other end of Japan. Both are very good.

The Yayoi settlement of Yoshinogari in northern Kyūshū is one of the world's most spectacular restored archaeological sites. No expense has been spared in recreating the appearance of its fortifications, storehouses and dwellings. It first attracted national attention following an extensive archaeological dig in the late 1980s, and once the public were allowed access tens of thousands of people began to visit the site. Visitor numbers have prompted the installation of car parks and other facilities round the edge of the site, none of which have detracted from the settlement itself, preserved within its fences at a considerable walking distance away.

A visit to Dazaifu in northern Kyūshū provides the visitor with a rich mixture of preserved sites and excellent museums that together tell the story of Japan's response to the threat of invasion during the 7th century AD. Mizuki, although pierced by a motorway and a railway line, is very impressive, and has more for the visitor to see than is provided by a long walk up the mountainsides to find the remains of Ono and Kii castles.

Not far from Mizuki is a bare field that is the site of what Mizuki was built to protect, the regional government headquarters of Dazaifu. There is a small museum next to the site with helpful displays in Japanese and English. A few miles away is the moderately interesting Dazaifu Historical Museum, which is now eclipsed by the airport-like building with which it shares its car park. This is the magnificent Kyūshū National Museum, opened in 2005 and designed to rival the other National Museums in Nara, Kyōto and Tokyo. The accent is very much on Japan's relations with its continental neighbours, which were conducted by and large through Kyūshū. The permanent gallery includes a model of the building of Mizuki.

The sites of the northern fortresses built against the *emishi* are also worth visiting. Tagajō, near modern Sendai, has little in the way of reconstruction, but a short walk away is the Tōhoku Historical Museum, with very good exhibits relating to the castle. In the city of Akita one may visit the site of Fort Akita (which the Tourist Information Office regularly confuses with Kubota Castle, the 16th-century edifice near the station!) Part of the wall has been reconstructed, and there is a small museum where visitors are made very welcome. Hotta lies a short journey to the south near the city of Omagari.

Here is a well-maintained site and a small museum, and there is an excellent spa complex (the Saku no Yu) next door to rest the weary traveller.

If one takes the train south from Omagari one arrives at Gosannen, which is the modern name given to the pleasant rural area that once saw the violence of the Gosannen (Later Three Years') War. The hill on which Kanezawa Fortress was built may be climbed, and a short distance away is the site of Yoshiie's siege headquarters, which is now a pleasant park.

North of Sendai lies the town of Hiraizumi. There is almost nothing left of Yanagi no Gosho, the Oshu Fujiwara's palace, but the temple of Mōtsuji, with its beautiful lake, brings back echoes of the glory of these northern lords. Yet even Mōtsuji is surpassed by the Konjikidō, the exquisite Buddha-hall that is the centrepiece of the Chūsonji Temple. This building, one of the few survivors from Heian Japan, and the finest of them all, is so precious that it has been encased within a protective outer building for centuries. It is now housed within a reinforced concrete bunker and is viewed through plate glass, but is still one of the most marvellous sights in Japan.

To gain a very good impression of the fortifications of the Northern Fujiwara it is necessary to take the train north from Hiraisumi to Esashi, where a shuttle bus will convey you to the Fujiwara Heritage Park. As noted above, this former film set reproduces the castles and palaces of the Heian Period better than anywhere else in Japan. Some of the detail is so good you will think you are in a perfectly preserved Kyōto temple.

Of the 14th-century fortresses, Kasagiyama is well worth a visit. There is a temple on the mountain called Kasagidera, where the buildings are integrated into the dramatic rock formations into which images of Buddha

The defence of a wooden wall supported by portable wooden shields during the War Between the Courts of the 14th century, as shown in this reproduction scroll in the Tōhoku History Museum at Tagajō.



have been carved. The defences of Kamakura, which make such good use of the natural geography, are easily explored on foot through the gullies craved out of the soft rock, and it is possible to walk or cycle the whole circuit of the former walls that were breached in 1333.

Ichijōdani is near the modern city of Fukui, from where the peaceful and attractive valley is reached easily by train. It is possible to begin at one end of the valley at the small but interesting museum, and then walk on a footpath that follows the road through rice fields, examining the excavated remains along the way until the site of the Asakura mansion and the reconstructed street is reached. The *yamashiro* is gained after a long climb.

For an interesting display about a settlement contemporary with Ichijōdani I recommend a visit to the reconstruction of Kusado Sengen, a medieval village reminiscent of the UK's Jorvik, inside the Hiroshima Prefectural Museum in Fukuyama.

The excavated castle sites of the Sengoku Period described above are nearly all well off the beaten track. The Takeda fortress of Takane involves a long train journey on the tiny but beautiful Iida line from Toyokawa, which passes through the battlefield of Nagashino. Takane Castle is within walking distance of Misakubo station. Of the Hōjō fortresses, Yamanaka is best approached by bus from Mishima station, a marvellous journey that provides increasingly better views of Mount Fuji the higher the bus climbs. Hachigata has a museum and some reconstruction, but for a stunning reconstruction Sakasai is without parallel. It is however very remote and a hire car is recommended.

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INDEX

References to illustrations are shown in **bold**.

FORTRESS • 74



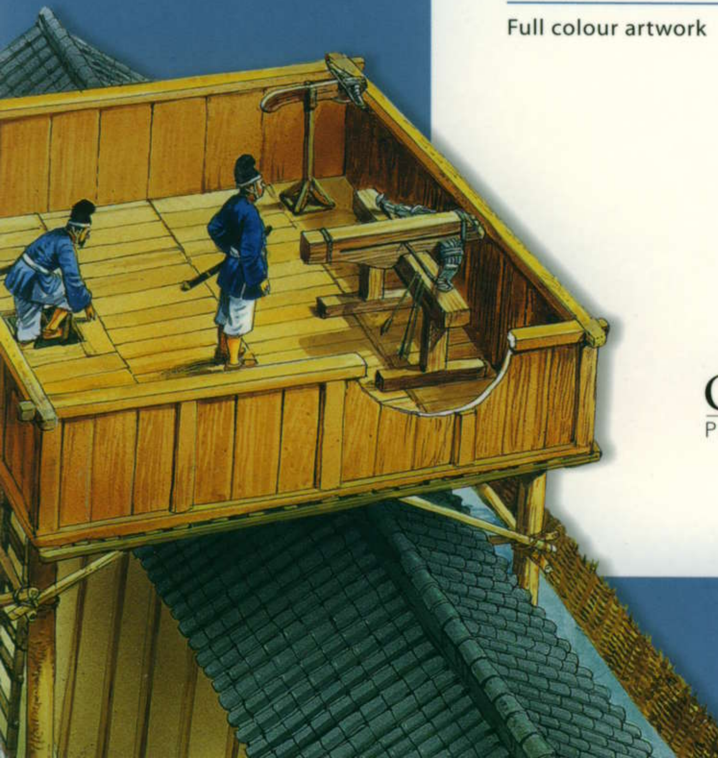


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